BOARDING SCHOOL DAYS

ILLUSTRATED

BY NAST & DARLEY

9-C-4

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive Collection
* This book may not leave the Offices and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days *

"His manner and voice showing, as he threw a hand to his head, that something awful had occurred to him." Page 277.

BOARDING-SCHOOL DAYS.

BY

VIEUX MOUSTACHE,

AUTHOR OF "TWO LIVES IN ONE" AND "THAT GOOD OLD
TIME, OR OUR FRESH AND SALT TUTORS."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

F. O. C. DARLEY AND THOMAS NAST.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY HURD AND HOUGHTON.
Cambridge: The Riverſide Preſs.
1873.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1872, by
HURD AND HOUGHTON,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
H. O. HOUGHTON AND COMPANY.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

FLY-LEAF PENCILINGS.—COMRADES' OUTLINES AND MINE OWN, ... 1

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDNIGHT COAST, ... 21

CHAPTER III.

A SKIRMISH WITH THE "TOWNIES."—MY BROTHER, . 35

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLEY BALCH'S METAMORPHOSIS, ... 48

CHAPTER V.

SPRING SPORTS.—BEN BARRY INCITING TROUBLE.—THE REBELLION, ... 73

CHAPTER VI.

MONSIEUR ALPHONSE.—PICNIC AND A SINGED FRENCHMAN.—MEETING A CONVICT IN MID-RIVER 93

CHAPTER VII.

A JUNE VACATION.—THE SCHOOL LIBRARY.—A STORY THERE.—ADVENTURE IN THE OLD MILL, . . . 113

CHAPTER VIII.

BREAKING IN FOR A SUMMER TERM.—A SON OF THE SEA AND A NEW TEACHER JOIN THE SCHOOL, ... 132

CHAPTER IX.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB."—HAZELTEEN'S STORY OF "THE HAUNTED HOUSE," 153

CHAPTER X.

PAGE
THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — CONCLUSION OF HAZELTEEN'S STORY, ... 173

CHAPTER XI.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — ROUGH'S STORY OF THE OLD MAN AND THE APE, ... 188

CHAPTER XII.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — OUR SAILOR-BOY'S STORY OF A CRUISE IN THE "SURF," 206

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — CHARLEY BALCH'S WRITTEN STORY FROM THE PRESERVED MANUSCRIPTS, 228

BOARDING-SCHOOL DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

FLY-LEAF PENCILINGS. — COMRADES' OUTLINES AND MINE OWN.

BETWEEN Squeers (who, though the creature of imagination, is said to be, in meanness and cruelty, the type of certain school-masters who once swayed the birch in Yorkshire) and Dr. Arnold there is an infinite distance; yet, if the records of Smike's sufferings are revolting, we cannot read the pages of Tom Brown's school-days at Rugby without pain. If the pendulum of facts never swings beyond the extreme of Nicholas Nickleby's experience in boarding-schools, the same pendulum, we may conclude, never passes the point of more fortunate boarding-school days than Tom Brown's.

At the best, the *régime* we speak of is a severe and critical exposure of a boy's welfare and happiness. Think of the vast power and influence in the hands of the school-master, one as prone to error as any man, yet sitting alone in judgment, and dispensing reward and punishment from the scales of Justice his own weak hands hold; think that, whilst corporal punishment is now forbidden even in the army and navy, and parents themselves hesitate to enforce it, the boarding-school principal, without trial or jury, cuts with his rattan through the young hands to the pliant characters, the tender hearts, and the delicate pride and self-respect of those forming for manhood beneath his sway; think of the estrangement from home, at this important period, of those to whom home influences should be so precious; think of the exposure to the diverse and dangerous examples of thirty, forty, or sixty other boys — with them day and night; think what the sensitive, and weakly in body or mind, suffer from the physical exposures, from homesickness, from the jeers, impositions, and cruelties of their comrades! True, that some escape harm from any of these evils, but how many, how very many, are thereby injured in body or mind, spirit or pride, for all after-life?

Boys are proverbially cruel. To their eyes — the eyes of a boarding-school community — the sin of sins is Innocence; wherefore, the new boy, unless he has already touched and tasted worldly pitch, is made the subject of practical jokes, or bullied, until he has put aside all "greenness." If all males went through the boarding-school training, the only human evergreens would be females. "Innocence," some one says, "is the foliage of youth." Then boarding-school life, I say, is the autumn to nip verdure. Yes; in the system we discourse of, not only is innocence the sin of sins, but physical strength and courage are the highest virtues.

Among the romances I have read is one a chapter of which treats of the hero's boarding-school: "An institution for the rising generation, in which the ways of the world are so successfully imitated that, in the qualities of foresight, cunning, duplicity, and general selfishness, the boy may indeed be said to be 'father to the man.'" Enlarging on its evils, the author adds, further on: "A little boy, with all his affections developing themselves; loving, and playful, and happy; not ashamed to be fond of his sisters, and thinking mamma all that is beautiful, and graceful, and good, is to be torn from that home which is to him an earthly paradise, and transferred to a place of which we had better not ask the urchin his own private opinion." . . . . "We appeal to every mother — and it is a mother who is best capable of judging for a child — whether her darling returns to her improved in her eyes after his first half-year at school? She looks in vain for the pliant, affectionate disposition, that a word from her used to be capable of moulding at will, and finds, instead, a stubborn, self-sufficient spirit, that has been called forth by harsh treatment and intercourse with the mimic world of boys; more selfish and more conventional, because less characteristic than that of men. He is impatient of her tenderness now, nay, half-ashamed to return it, and thinks it manly to make light of those affections and endearments by which he once set such store. Hardships, buffetings, adversity, all these are good for the *youth*, but for heaven's sake, spare the child."

But, as Tupper tells us, —

> "There is no error so crooked, but it hath in it some lines of truth;
> Nor is any poison so deadly that it serveth not some wholesome use."

The boarding-school is the leech to families apoplectic of children. Perhaps it is the only place for some hardened youngster, as the State-prison is the *propria domus* of burglars and cut-throats; or perhaps it rescues some from foolish, injudicious parents. And sometimes, but how rarely, where the teachings and examples of parents have found good, strong soils, and home influences remain cherished and unsullied in honest, sturdy natures — and all these are the parts of strong characters — and such characters are joined to not too few years, *then* its "hardships, buffetings, adversity, are good for the youth."

No matter to which of those classes I belonged, yet, though I remember sorrows, pains, and trials, my boarding-school experience is thought over with pleasure. But I was at one which I believe to have been the best of the kind. Its principal was a man whom almost all of his pupils will ever think of with love and respect. The stormy days of the past are fortunately not so vividly remembered as its seasons of sunshine and joy. We bit through the skin and rind of homesickness, strangers, bullying, torment, and injustice, to find some sweetness at the core ; and it is that pleasant part principally that I now wish to recall with my pen.

Many a poor fellow in the dirt and brutality of the forecastle — whose "home is the rolling deep" — can tell us how "Tom Cringle's Log," or Maryatt, misled him ; and "Robinson Crusoe" is the *ignis fatuus* accountable for many a bone lodged in the ocean-coral, or wrapped in the sea-weed, or for the skeleton that lies bleaching on the lone barren island of far-off seas. It was Miss Edgeworth, I think, who wrote that fascinating little story, "Barring Out." What boy has not read it? Well, I hold that good lady responsible for THAT *ignis fatuus* which danced and flickered before me while I gladly agreed in the parental proposition of boarding-school, and which still led me on until I was fairly in the quagmire of homesickness and torment. All through my school career I constantly beheld the same treacherous spark of fancy twinkling here and there ; now over the principal's head, to whom it lent the appearance of a tyrant, and then above some necessarily stringent rule or enactment, which it made to appear arbitrary and unjust, inducing, and making tempting, many a scheme of mutiny and rebellion, to which there were never wanting bold leaders.

The first fortnight — what a homesick, wretched period of my existence ! Lately, I picked out of my mother's letter-bag some of the daily records of those two weeks, and read them in wonderment.

Could it be that I was ever such a simple-hearted, affectionate, sentimental little boy? It seemed as if I were reading the memorials of some other person, whose boyhood was so full of feeling, delicacy, and tenderness, that, like such romance characters, manhood was never reached. I thought *that* boy must have died away from home — an unappreciated soul. "Poor little devil," thought I, with contemptuous pity, my eyes glowing the while over the touching pages, so carefully traced; "why, what a soft! he ought to have stayed at home." Yes; there sat I, a rough, hardy man, blowing a cloud, by permission, in my mother's room, and ruthlessly rummaging, with a joke here and there, over the little woods strewn thick with the dead leaves of many a summer, to that mother, who, with half a smile and half a tear, understood my fun, as but a thin sheet of ice over the feelings evoked. Coming again to my own signature, I had to take the pipe from my mouth and ask: "Mother, did *I really* write these letters? Do you recognize in me the black sheep, the tough-hearted, the dear, gushing little boy in his first term at school?"

It is true that an unsophisticated youth (commonly called among his comrades "green 'un"), with warm home affections, will write more genuine love-letters to his mother, in his first year at boarding-school, than he will ever after write to sweetheart or wife.

In my bedroom were four other boys. The lord of our room, indeed, the king of the school, had the bed next to mine. From an injury received in infancy he was lame, one of his lower limbs being almost powerless, and the other having suffered somewhat; but he was gifted with immense strength of arms. His chest and shoulders were those of a boy Hercules. Having obstinacy and undaunted pluck, besides a strong, clear, vigorous mind, and a jolly, frank disposition, he was the most popular boy in the school, and exerted the strongest influence. His nickname was "Rough." Rough occupied the bed on my right; on my left was my brother. At the further end of the room was one of the finest characters in the school, known by the cognomen "Brick;" perhaps because he was such a thorough good fellow. Next to him was "Drake Gracie."

As a usual thing, perfect quiet reigned in the bedrooms after the hour for retiring — nine; but sometimes the risk of punishment was taken to have a little shindy, and when the teacher, who had charge of the conduct of a certain set of rooms, was absent, or otherwise engaged, those under his rule were sure to take advantage of the occurrence. Of course, a whispered conversation could always be indulged in, but at such other times as I have alluded to, songs and pillow-fights were fully enjoyed. The first acquaintance I made at school was Rough. He sang remarkably well, whistled superbly, and was passionately fond of music.

On the second or third night of my new life, my neighbor Rough, as soon as the lights were put out, commenced, like a nightingale, his whistle. His selections, being melancholy, accorded with my feelings, and as I was equally fond of music, and an adept at piping, I joined melodies, coming in with a second. As my audacity was musical, Rough said not a word, but seemed to try my range, whistling every good thing he could lay his lips to. I knew all the popular operatic airs, and my *répertoire* was not limited. Finally, he paused, and then came the nearest approach to a kind word I had heard since my introduction among forty strangers. "Good! greeny; but where in the mischief did you learn all those? Like music, eh? Well, try first, and I'll go second." So we went on, until a stern voice out of the darkness called: "Stop that whistling immediately: have no more of it!" Deep silence, as if we had been asleep for hours, and then, as I heard the creaking of the tutor's steps dying away down the hall, there was a rustling in my neighbor's bed, and I noticed, by the dim light from the window, that Rough was perched on his footboard. In a loud voice, and with solemn emphasis, he chanted (I did not know whether it was a crow of defiance to the departing teacher or his usual evening prayer; at any rate, it shocked me terribly *then*): —

"MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, and JOHN,
Guard the bed that I lay on!
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round my head;

> One to watch, one to pray,
> And two to bear my soul away!"

And tumbling back on his blankets, with an "amen," he was snoring away in a minute more, as if the devotions just expressed were the most soothing sentiments he could have uttered. In the first days of our acquaintance, when I foolishly rebelled against his sway, and refused the obedience and respect he required from his roommates, he would often quietly and sternly swing himself to wherever I happened to be, and unless I escaped by my better legs, would in a moment pull me to the floor, and then, having got a grab of me in those terrible arms, the vice grew tighter and tighter until I submitted, or he feared to increase the squeeze. My pommeling and biting were useless. Rough was as tough as he was strong. But nevertheless, and though I was a new boy and he one of the oldest, our friendship grew. That was many years ago; and now, Rough, a quiet, philosophizing, musical man, visits my country home sometimes, and, amidst considerable tobacco-smoke, musical sounds, and clustering recollections of our boyhood's "auld lang syne," we pass days together in the happiness of friendship.

In the pillow-fights, by putting out of the way some ghostly, night-walking tutor, we conducted things with the assistance of history, though its decisions were oftentimes reversed. Rough was Richard Cœur de Lion; Drake Gracie was the fierce, active, nerve-strung Saladin; Frederick I. of Germany appeared in that dear old fellow, my brother; Brick was the gallant but jealous Philip of France; and I, the perfidious Archduke of Austria, in whose dungeons the Saracens' admired enemy, "Melech Ric," was immured so long. But as *we made* history, Saracen and French king, with German and Austrian, were allied against the redoubtable Cœur de Lion, and the contest was generally one way. Impetuous Richard would sound the war-cry, "Up, sleepy-heads! up, sovereigns of the eastern world!" and whack his ponderous club of feathers upon my snoring head. In a moment all was *mêlée*. My brother scrambled to avenge the Austrian; Saladin charged swiftly on the English rear, and brave Philip came rushing to the contest. Rough's head would take it heavily for a while, until his strong arms had a chance for a clean, vigorous blow, when down would go two or three assailants, tumbling off the bedsides, or keeling over the foot-board. Then enraged Richard, having driven the enemy from his borders, pursued them, scrambling from bed to bed, while we, more active, dodged beneath them, or kept beyond his reach. At length, having exhausted our zeal and endurance, and left many an aching head, fiery Cœur de Lion would drive some unfortunate sovereign, decked in the unwarrior-like, but Zouavy night-shirt, into a corner of Europe, and there lamm him to his heart's content. Sometimes, however, though it was but seldom, Richard was worsted by combined strength and previously arranged strategy.

The history of each such campaign appeared the next day from Drake Gracie's ready pen; and as it was passed from desk to desk of the actors thereof, its correctness was quarreled over, as Lord Mahon and President Sparks disputed over the records of the American Revolution.

Brick was a general favorite with the teachers as well as with the boys. His frank, handsome face, and evident impress of a bright and noble character, were recommendations which, added to his well-known candor and integrity, insured his enviable popularity. Our old French teacher — *the* character of our little community — conceived an almost paternal affection for him. Monsieur Alphonse was one of those Gallic anomalies of eccentricity, irritability, impatience, pedantry, want of dignity, and affectionate tender-heartedness, in well-polished, slightly patched, sharp-pointed boots, and otherwise clothed in rather peculiar, if not quaint garments sprinkled with snuff, that we sometimes kindly smile over, or irresistibly pity, in the pages of old novels, or that we see represented with humor, and almost pathos at times, on the stage; Monsieur Tourbillon, for instance, in Bourcicault's "Parents and Guardians." I am reminded of him just here, because we all loved to tease him, and one day, Brick, with a boy's thoughtlessness, I would say cruelty if speaking of any one else, provoked Monsieur Alphonse too far. The old Frenchman's face clouded with wrath; but as he regarded its cause, the darkness broke to a childish sadness, and tears trickled down beside the fat nose, as, in a voice trembling with emotion, he said: "Ah! B-rr-ens-mad" (Brinsmade was the surname), "B-rr-ens-mad, *why* you do me so? have I not always love you as my son?" And then his feelings were too turbulent for words. The immense silk handkerchief, dusty, and odorous with snuff and garlic, was pulled from his pocket; a sob, a sneeze, and a violent blowing of the nose restored him, and our lesson was resumed.

Brinsmade! my boyhood's companion, my partner in many an exciting adventure, in many a long summer Saturday's ramble, who learned with me to swim and pull an oar in the clear waters of the Croton; my room-mate and class-mate in those thoughtless days gone by, afterward my chum at Cambridge — always my dear friend. Alas! never again will we meet to recall the years we passed together! He fell at Antietam; gallantly fulfilling what he believed his duty, with affections at the North cherished almost as fondly as his ties at the South, without hatred or prejudice to bring to the battle, that noble fellow went down before the fire of a Massachusetts regiment, in which two of his closest friends were leading companions. Little we thought, handling the musket in the old school-day drills, that the comrades of those hours would, a few years later, have to turn their bayonets against one another's breasts.

Boys caricature one another with a word — the nickname. How with a pet expression, that comes you know not how, and yet sticks afterwards as a leech, one's faults, misfortunes, or eccentricities are put in short-hand. Like pulling the hat down over a man's eyes, — the good-looking, or dignified, or gentlemanly wearer is made ridiculous, but the rowdy is only made to appear more of a rowdy, and the merry-andrew to look more the buffoon, — the unfortunate's natural features are covered by a guise, which, though it fits snugly as possible, is hard to remove. We had a "Traddles," whose cognomen was won because of the same peculiarity as distinguished David Copperfield's school-friend: he was a comical fellow, and, instead of sums, figured the most ridiculous skeletons, each one having an individual character as full of fun and oddity as Doyle's or Cruikshank's sketches of fleshy forms. He had really a genius in that gaunt, bony line. I always thought he would become in manhood a cemetery artist, and imagined how happy he would be carving death-heads, and cross-bones, and Father Time on vaults and tombstones. But I met him lately; he had forgotten (*he said*, with a bite at the end of his cigar) that he had ever had any such peculiarity or nickname; and I found him a very steady young man, in the enjoyment of fortune, and with no apparent taste for *post-mortem* anatomy. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis?*

We had a "Lilliput," and of course "Fatties," "Nellies," and "Peggies;" a tall, good-hearted fellow, with curls "ambrosial," but unfortunately red, got the sobriquet, "Light-house." But "Pudding-Head!" Have I not a reader to recognize that familiar name of the best of school-fellows? He was of the same genus as "Peggotty," the brothers "Cheeryble," and "Captain Cuttle," and who does not love them? He was honest and rough as the best of them; as simple-minded, as true and soft-hearted, with the same reverence for women, and brave as Curtius. When new at school his amiability and ingenuousness made him the butt for jokes and bullying, and he had been among us nearly six months before a snap of a wet towel on his bare back proved the period to many impositions. The aggressor was the largest and strongest boy in the school, but in a terrible fight of about twenty minutes, he was as badly treated as was the Englishman Mace years after. A new character, who entered the school some time afterwards, with a reputation for wonderful strength and skill, envied our Hector's fame, and contrived to draw Pudding-Head into a fight. He succeeded, and, though a fellow of the best pluck and power, was so completely used up in the encounter that, as a Western boy expressed it among a knot of companions talking over the eventful fight: "I tell you, fellows, Knowles was just chawed up."

The illustrious deeds of the forefathers of ancient Rome, we are told, were preserved in the recitations of fathers to sons, and publicly chanted on the days of feasts and celebrations. How often, too, in the enchantment of Scott, do we about the generous board and blazing fire-place of castle or baronial hall, listen to the bard and harper proudly narrating with brave music the legends of the battles, and prowess of their ancestors. So — yes, even with as much interest and pride, in each boarding-school community, are the exploits of old boys — the romances of a few years back — preserved and repeated from term to term. Encounters with the " townies," a victory of some daring fellow over some unpopular tutor, a successful runaway and its incidents, the talent of such an one, are all recorded, and perhaps added to by set to set. In that way do no doubt those battles of that simple-hearted, amiable, plucky old Pudding-Head, find bards and glowing hearers in those same gray stone walls to-day. Of a wet winter afternoon's play-hour, about some popular desk in the old school-room, dusky in the fading light; or in summer, lying in the green orchard around the trunk of a veteran apple-tree, whose remains form the story-teller's throne, I can see now the clustering group of boys; or in the hour after bed-time, when the lights are all out, I see the room-mate squatting, wrapped in blankets, on and about the bed of one, probably the eldest, who recounts in a low voice the tale he heard from perhaps a contemporary of the hero's.

Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat, may account for my forgetting Pudding-Head's well-known valor, and one evening insulting the good fellow, until he slapped my face, and I pitched over the monitor's desk, and into an affray, from which I came out with the blackest and most swollen of eyes and the goriest of noses. Thanks to the interference of others, and the forbearance of my generous adversary, I escaped with no worse punishment. But as one who had put on the gloves with Jackson, or crossed swords with Admirable Crichton, might thereafter brag of the honor, so I, to this day, am proud to smooth out that feather in my self-esteem, though it was attained in defeat. From that time were we the warmest friends; yes, and afterwards I saw him conquered, and to me was his captivity told. Miss R——, your victims have been many, but what conquest (intentional or accidental) more complete than that over the big heart of that school-boy? Do I hear you answer: "That over *you*, interrogator?" That big, tough fellow of fifteen confided to me with womanly emotion his passion. No doubt, the memories of first love were often cherished and honored companions of his true, manly heart, in many a Southern bivouac and march. The enchantress of those boarding-school days, making so many of us alternately happy and miserable, exerted a greater influence than she imagined perhaps. On drill or parade her presence was as the hope of glory to the actual soldier; and on the twenty-second of February, that golden day of all the year to the fortunate orators, to win her approving words, or her soft white hand in the dance following our exercises, was to more than realize the sweets of later fame.

In a boarding-school experience of four years and a half, I was at different times under the instruction of about twenty tutors, and I do not remember any one of those who was not faithful to his duties as an instructor; but, as a general thing, there their interest in the boys stopped. Few, very few, attempted any influence otherwise with us; and there were fifty or sixty boys, whose characters were to be understood and directed, whose principles were to be formed and elevated, whose tastes were to be controlled, whose sympathies and affections should have been won and guided to good; the tender, quick-growing shoots of character of so many were left to the culture of one person. That principal was constantly earnest and active in his efforts to read and improve the diversities of character and mind intrusted to his charge, and I am astonished that he was able to reach and direct for good as many as he did, seeing how often the parent fails with only one or two. As in a wood or orchard growing thickly together, the outside older trees feel the strengthening influences of sun and atmosphere, whilst those less hardy, overshadowed and crowded by their neighbors, and getting neither wholesome warmth nor invigorating breezes, are dwarfed and injured, never afterwards recovering their rightful stature; and when some, grown on the same acre, are valuable and thrifty, they having been unreached by the good influences which nurtured their companions, bear neither fruit nor foliage; so it is in the growing wood of schoolboys. The eye, the heart, and the mind of one man — be that eye ever so true, be that heart ever so tender, be that mind ever so searching — cannot find out and penetrate the dark places, the hidden influences and young tendencies, cannot warm and inspire the good seeds, cannot understand the peculiarities, and justly estimate the characters of all beneath his government. From which it results that some few are guided and cultivated for the best, while many are neglected or misunderstood.

Among my school-mates I could cite many whose school career must remain a regret and injury to them to this day, who possess no affectionate remembrances of those boyhood days, and think with no pride of the spot where they tarried; their good impulses unappealed to, and their dispositions misunderstood or wrongly bent, by those who might have skillfully urged them to nobleness. Could some one have spoken the right word, the kind word — acted in the judicious and friendly way to reach the good spring of action, what a slough of mire they might have emerged from? There were some, I know, who have been rescued and started afresh on high dry ground. There were trees that, could sun and air have reached them, would have grown to strength and goodliness.

Further on in these pages I record a remarkable instance of such rescue and new life in a sketch of Charley Balch's metamorphosis.

What of those school-days pleasanter to recall than the Saturdays in spring, when Charley and I, and perhaps one or two others, strayed off with hatchet and lunch-basket for a day of enjoyment. Spring, with its essence of glad poetry, dancing in our blood and brains, making winter seem like a prison-cell escaped, and itself the riches of freedom and beauty. Ah! old comrades, I would like to push my way again with you up over the hills that roll back from the Hudson, shouting in the appreciation of a boyhood's Saturday. I would like to bivouac again at mid-day by those rampant little brooks, that seemed actually crazy with joy — that joined with our boyish shouts of laughter, and bubbled and splashed in their gladness to give us beakers of their health and spirit.

And those warm, humming, sleepy days of summer, or the golden-aired, hazy autumn days, when every sound was musical, and we, not far from the great tree and the simple, white Dutch church, where Major André was taken, and near the bridge that once resounded with the mad, galloping hoofs of the headless horseman's devilish steed, heard again the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow;" where we climbed the lithe hickories to bend them, swinging to the ground, and sought out some venerable oak, of great stature, from whose height we might look down on the blue of the Hudson, and its white sail-dots, or in whose sturdy arms we heard from our best companion, Charley, tales as full of romance as the season. Dear Sleepy Hollow! the happy valley of those boarding-school days, in Irving's words I say: "If ever I should wish for a retreat, whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley."

Boarding-school days! The failures and successes, disgraces and honors of that mimic world; its friendships and enmities, its poetry and prose, its trials and dreariness, its pleasure and fun. The vacations of happiness, unalloyed save by the Nemesis of return; the long terms, their days and weeks nearer release, tallied with almanac and pins; each month noted thankfully from my bed, as the moonlight passed from one to another of the tall, stiff poplars in the procession on the hill, and the kind, hope-assuring beams wove themselves into the drowsy thoughts of home, and the happy dreams of boyhood's sleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDNIGHT COAST.

THE keen edge which life has in youth — that intensity of thought, action, and feeling — tones down and rounds off as manhood has constantly to mow where weeds, nettles, and wire-grass grow among the grain. At forty, one almost forgets the flashing edge of youth, — how it looked, how it *felt;* how sharply and deliciously it cut, and, too, how badly the smallest stone in the swathway nicked its keenness. But at rare times we may suddenly recall and appreciate what years of strife, schemes, and ambition have hidden from us; may realize at moments how, before the weighty cares and troubles of later years sprung up, the earth was a garden — a wild one it is true, where poisonous poppies and ivies grew side by side with violets and roses, — but yet a garden. "I would I were a boy again," though we may hum it without a sigh, is more than tune or song to us as limbs stiffen and wrinkles multiply, and our hearts unconsciously leave the possessions of the Present to stretch back again for the Romance of Boyhood, — its friendships, its chivalry, its ignorant and daring self-reliance; to fight again the school battles; and perhaps eager to catch a reflection, however slight, of that glorious halo of ingenuous, impassioned zest adorning every boyish game and jest — every youthful overflow.

Filled with such a covetous retrospect to-night, I got up a while ago, from easy chair and study lamp, to look out on the country, now perfectly covered with snow: the white, lineless fields sparkling with diamond-like crystals, innumerable as the twinkling stars above; the feathery trees; the silvered fences wandering up to barn and hay-stack and down to the stream, whose voice, hoarse with cold, I could not hear. I saw the full winter moonlight flooding the scene with a strange beauty; and, as I stood surveying the picture, started to hear my own exclamation, "What a night! and over there, what a hill for a coast!" Remembering the frolic of a night like this in my boarding-school days, I shall try to recreate, as vividly as my pen has power, the stolen coast some five or six of us comrades took.

The bed hour was nine, and we, sharers of the northwest corner room, which looked away off on the bold landscape divided by the Hudson, and was bright as day with moonlight, had been listening enraptured for nearly an hour to a story some one in a low voice improvised, — we fellows being wrapped in blankets and perched on and about the story-teller's bed, — when the narrative wound off the last of its romantic coils in a concise and satisfying termination, a momentary silence attested the excellence of the story-teller's success, which was suddenly broken by a loud exclamation of Brick Brinsmade, "Cricky, fellows! wouldn't Drag Hill be stunning to-night!" "Let 's go," answered Drake Gracie, a visitor from a neighboring room, always one of the quickest and boldest heads and arms in any scheme of adventure,—"Let's go, I say: who will know it? Choose one to stay here and snore in case old Riley comes snuffing around. Let another go down through the house, unlock the wash-room door, and quietly get our sleds out. Get Grant and Pudding-Head from No. 7, and then all we have to do is to open the window here" — laying his hand, as he spoke, on the window-sill — "and slide down the lightning-rod." "Lightning-Rod?" inquired Nelly Wrang (I have forgotten his real Christian name; indeed, I doubt if I ever knew it, for he was always called "Nelly"), who had remained in his bed all through Charley's exciting story, — "Lightning-Rod?" he repeated. "Yes, Miss Nelly," answered Drake Gracie in an irritated, contemptuous tone, "as you have said, L-i-g-h-t-n-i-n-g-R-o-d."

"Well," said Nelly again, "I guess you will go down that quicker than you think."

"Really, Mademoiselle, do you guess that? Now shut up your head. Boys, we need not draw lots to remain, for Nelly is exactly the tender young creature to stay in bed, and by the spurs of a fighting-cock," continued Gracie, advancing toward Nelly's bed, "if Riley or any other tutor comes in here and discovers our absence, hang me if I don't make you groan to-morrow."

So Gracie disposed of that question, and while Brick was carrying out the burglar part of our plan, we others — Grant and Pudding-Head having been called and given delighted assent to the proposed fun — clothed ourselves and waited orders. All being prepared, Drake Gracie gave the signal by opening the window noiselessly. Then stretching out to the rod, he shook it to try its firmness, and commenced the rather perilous descent. There were thirty-five sections to slide, but he accomplished it safely, and each of us, in his turn, followed. Beneath our place of exit, and only twelve feet one side of the iron slideway, was a window of our principal's room. No unusual noise, however, disturbed his slumbers. When all the party had made a landing on the snowy ground, we stole close along the length of the old stone school-house, and turning the corner, met Brick with three sleds. Seeking the shadowy side of the play-ground fence, we reached the orchard, and passing the stable and garden, emerged by a gateway into the road. Feeling pretty sure of our coast now, we trotted quietly through the village outskirts and commenced the mile and a half rise to Drag Hill. A mile back on the road we had travelled, there could be seen in the bright moonlight but one moving thing, — a sleigh coming our way very quickly. But there were no bells on the horse, or we could have heard them tinkle in the midnight quiet. That noiseless, quick-gliding sleigh in the distance, seen through the bright but illusive light of the moon, had a strange, ghostly effect. We all turned and watched it for a moment, and then pushed on again toward the summit of Drag Hill, the east descent of which was our favorite coasting-ground and the goal of this midnight expedition.

I doubt if there is a finer snow-hill this side of the Rocky Mountains for a race than that same Drag Hill. A broad, steep, curving road, bridging two brooks and reaching more than half a mile in length, first descending suddenly the open hill-side, then decreasing the angle until it fell almost to a level in passing through a dark hemlock wood, again to take a downward leap, swing over the last bridge, and come to flatness in the valley where a cross-road met it.

By the same cross-road one could go to the next village south — Tarrytown — or, by another turn off, get back on the road which led directly from our village and school-house over Drag Hill.

We let out talk, songs, and whistles, as we exultingly climbed up and higher up, until the broad Hudson was far beneath us in the distance, — a long roll of misty moonlight, — and the school-house roof shone below our feet.

There was not a rustle of wind. Everything was cold, glistening, and quiet, until a farmer's dog made the air vibrate with his sharp alarm, and some restless rooster stuck his musical bill from a coop to ask his friends all around " Cock-a-doodle-doo! How are you?" which salute, as you may feel sure, was soon responded to by every cock within a mile who could strike a note.

At length we stood panting on the top of Drag Hill. Tired by the scramble, we seated ourselves on the sleds for a few moments before commencing the sport we had come for, and surveyed again the fine spread of landscape below us. Suddenly one of us exclaimed: "Well, fellows, there is the same sleigh we saw a while ago. There — don't you see it — right at the foot of our climb-up?"

"Yes," said another, "but it won't come this way, for, see, it turns to the right. The driver can't know much or he would not take that longer and harder way to Tarrytown. Hullo! He has brought his horse to a walk and is looking up this way — isn't he?"

"Yes," Drake Gracie replied. "Why, what a cove — doesn't he know where he is, and what in the mischief can he be doing at this time of night prowling about in such a way without a bell on his horse? But no matter, boys; let us mind our own fun, and who is in for the first go?" and he jumped up and swung his sled around ready for the dash.

In a second more we had all sprung up and had our sleds in position. Some holding them in their arms, ready to run and slam them for a strong start. Others, some feet in advance, who were to ride double (thereby having extra weight to balance their adversaries' start from a run), stood, pictures of eagerness, each bent over his underman, with hands on the shoulders of the one lying flat, and ready for the strong shove and jump which must start the sled and put the steerer in well-balanced position on the back of his partner. There was Drake Gracie in the rear, trembling for the spring — his sled "Commodore," acknowledged the fastest in our company, held high and lightly. This time Drake was the only single entry for the race — every coast was a race. In the advance was Grant's sled, the "Licketty Swizzle," and mine, the "Lafitte"; Brinsmade being under-man on the "Licketty," and Pudding-Head taking that place with me.

Grant was to give the word for a start. See them in that second of expectancy; every limb aching for release! "Go! — Slam — Hi, hi! whirr!" — Quick as a flash every man was under way with a buzzing rush like the headway of a rocket. All in a line — real fierceness in that glide, runner to runner! In a twinkle or two of the stars overhead the coasters had gained a railroad speed, and their shouts of excitement were crackling through the frosty night as electric explosions — sharp and fiery — singing with fervor. In a moment the snow-course will be run, but many minutes must pass before sleds and drivers make the toilsome ascent to the hill-top again.

In this interlude, a stranger to coasting on those Westchester Hills, might ask some explanation of how it was managed, and if one of the boys waited on the hill-top for his turn in the next run, I fancy he would have answered: —

"A stranger in these parts, I suppose you are, sir? O! from down-east — eh? Well, coasting is everywhere pretty much the same, but I guess our hills are bigger and longer-sloped than those about Boston, and our sleds, I know, are different from yours, and, I think, much better. Phew! ain't it cold up here? You see our sleds are set up higher; they have not as much timber in them as yours have, but are heavier and well braced with iron rods, so they bear slumping slams — we always take a run and slam when we go single belly-gutters. Our runner-tires are not round as yours, and they are thicker; why, we fellows take the greatest care to get the best steel for them, and handle them as carefully as a barber does his razors. We choose the hickory, too, for the frames — hickory that has had years of seasoning. Yes, we think we know as much about coasting as the next chaps, wherever they may be, and — excuse me — but I think we could rather take down a peg your boys on the Mall. You don't believe it — eh? Well, all right. Hurra! They are coming up. Good! the Licketty Swizzle has beat as sure as truth. Hip, hip, hurra!"

Twelve times we ran, the Commodore winning seven races, the Licketty Swizzle four, and the Lafitte one. Differences of weight and pilotage varied the established speed of the contending sleds. Mine would have won another race instead of Grant's, had not my pirate-sled come to grief on the second bridge. It happened in this way: I was flying past both the Commodore and Licketty Swizzle, who were head to head, when they, acting unfairly, not only refused to give the track I called for, but crowded me off on an icy slope inclining to the bridge side. On that surface, where my feet were unable to steer and the sled-runners to find a hold, the Lafitte made a tremendous *slue;* and as one side struck a post of the bridge we — Brick was my under-man that trip — tipped, swerved around the post, and pitched together into the snow-drift by the brookside twelve feet below, but were not hurt.

The moon was getting low. Already the valley end of our coasting hill grew dark in shadows ; so we knew it was time to be off if we would profit by what light remained to get home. We made a last coast, and, thoroughly tired, took up our sled-ropes to lazily climb the hill ; when casting a side look along the valley road, I saw some distance down in its indefinite shadows, a sleigh. It was certainly a sleigh, with horse and driver — all motionless beneath some hemlock-trees. It was a surprising sight at that time of night, or rather very early morning, — that dimly outlined vehicle and statue-like horse and driver, on that out-of-the-way road and in those hemlock shadows. With our jolly associations of sleighing it seems almost impossible to imagine anything ghostlike attached to such scenes, but yet that glance gave me a start and chill as if my eyes had encountered an apparition from the land of spirits.

I whispered to my companions, telling them to take a side peep down the valley road. So they did, as we commenced the ascent of the hill, and I managed boldly to whistle a stave or two from "Such a getting Up-stairs." Now I shall not exactly say we were frightened, but certainly what we had all seen made our start up that hill the quickest walk I ever indulged in at that early hour of morning. After a hundred yards or more had been walked Pudding-Head said, "Why, what 's the hurry? we ain't frightened at an old horse and sleigh — are we? I sha'n't blow myself up Drag Hill for that old chap resting his horse by the road-side. He will come up to us in a moment, and perhaps give us a ride."

"I say so too," echoed Brick; "what 's to be scared at? Let 's take it easy and get a ride. I wonder if that is the same sleigh we have seen twice before. That one had not a single bell, and if this fellow had bells we would certainly have heard them before he came to a halt, unless he stopped there just as we started down the last coast — eh?"

"Who cares," said Grant, "whether it is that sleigh or another sleigh — whether it has bells or has not bells? One might think we had seen the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow on his terrible steed 'Gunpowder.' Hasn't a fellow got a right to drive on the road at any time of night without a sleigh-bell? If you see a fellow three times in one night, does that make him a ghost? What a set of fools!"

Then Drake proposed walking slowly, so that if the sleigh we had seen did come along we might get a ride. Grant dropped his cross tone and continued with a yawn, "Let 's go gently, boys ; I am tired. Walking ten or eleven times up this pesky hill I call doing between six and seven miles — all up-hill too — phew ! If our ghostly friend does not come and give us a lift I shall think we are out of luck."

Slipping on the worn, ice-covered track, or stumbling heavily through the side drifts, we marched on — tired, sleepy boys. Two thirds of the way up, the moon, now but steeple-high above the horizon, was hidden by a heavy cloud. "Hi !" exclaimed Pudding-Head, "this is pretty dark, but in twenty minutes more it will be darker yet. However, with star and snow, not even a blind beggar needs a lantern. But why doesn't our scarecrow friend come along. E-u-g-h ! O, O !" What a yell of alarm !

The moon reappeared from the cloud at that instant, but it needed not her bright light to show us what had caused Pudding-Head's cries and his tumble into a snow-drift. Walking some steps behind the rest of us, he had suddenly heard a horse's pant almost on his shoulder, and turning his face in alarm, the horse's leg had struck him behind and knocked him over.

There was the noiseless apparition in the middle of us ; the horse, covered with a long gray blanket, striding along ; no noise of any kind, — bell, thump, nor voice — only the panting of a tired steed. There sat the motionless driver, wrapped to his eyes in robes, and seemingly unconscious that another live thing save his horse was near. I think we were all startled — perhaps *frightened*. I am free to confess that I felt as if a long cold, thin hand had taken a grasp on my heart. There was something terribly unpleasant in the situation. Grant, however, sang out in a second or two, — his voice was husky and uncertain, I know, but I never knew Grant under the roughest circumstances to make a dead *funk*, — Grant sang out, " Well, stranger, couldn't you call out, and not let your horse walk us all down, — hang you ! I say — there goes Brick's sled. Stop your horse, I say : " with that he sprang forward and caught the horse by the bridle. The strange driver had heretofore not even glanced at us, nor shown in any way a consciousness of our presence. While Grant called to him, he continued the same spectre-like immobility, but as quick as Grant's spring, a long, heavy lash fell on the steed's flank and Grant's shoulders ; and, as the horse sprang forward, our daring comrade was jerked from his feet and thrown off the road.

In a half-minute more, before either Pudding-Head or Grant had gotten firmly on the road again, and while the fears of the others of us had increased with the events born, as if of witchcraft, the phantom-like sleigh, driver, and horse stood motionless again twenty yards before us. We were all now thoroughly under the spell. Grant, if he did not look alarmed, appeared at least stunned and subdued, while we others looked first on the demon sleigh and then at one another in speechless horror. As we stood thus we heard a stern, deep, hollow voice say, "*Get in!*" Unhesitatingly we all obeyed, huddling as far back in the sleigh and at as great distance from the driver as possible, but, like real boys, holding on, even in our alarm, to our sled-ropes. In a moment, without word from the driver, we sped off with a rush, flying up hill and down hill, past trees, fences, and barns, with the speed of a locomotive. The fine snow particles thrown from the horse's hoofs flew about us in clouds of crystals. Every uncertain object by the wayside seemed to whirl by in a mad dance. Our heads grew dizzy in the rush, and yet there were no noises save the hollow, mysterious patter of the steed's hoofs, and the soft, long, metallic ring from the sleigh's runners. Where we were going, and how this horrible ride was to end, were thoughts like a nightmare.

Our journey could not have lasted more than ten or fifteen minutes, yet it seemed hours even until Grant whispered coolly, "I believe this is a *sell* after all; for I'll be bound this is a genuine fur, stable-smelling buffalo under me; and these side-boards were certainly planed by a flesh-and-blood mechanic, for I have run a splinter in my hand: but we do go fast!" The moon was down now, and the wind came out with wails and shrieks, and cut us to the bones.

Our speed decreased — an average trot — a sudden halt — and our confused intellects recognized that we stood at the gate to our school-house. The demon driver threw off a coil of neck and face wrappers, turned his head slightly, and in the calm, satirical tones of our drill-master (he was also the generally recognized head of an unavowed school-police) uttered the sentence, "Young men, get down now; open that gate for me, and see that you get to your rooms as quietly and expeditiously as possible."

We did as ordered, and without a word, except those which Grant grunted out with a half-laugh as we sneaked up the dark stairway, "Checkmated by the Captain; well done!"

The consequences of our midnight coast were that we each had to copy five hundred lines of Virgil without blot or error, that our sleds were confiscated for a month, and that none of us saw Drag Hill again that winter.

It had happened that the Captain, who was a sly, wide-awake old fellow, with an enormous *detective* bump, had witnessed our escape, and, wishing to scent out the whole matter and catch us *in flagrante delicto*, had cautiously descended to the stable and quickly harnessed, without bells, Mr. Norris's fastest horse, and thrown a blanket over him so as to disguise the animal. Then he had followed our track, taken the road round the hill, waited quietly in the valley road, and captured us as my story has told.

CHAPTER III.

A SKIRMISH WITH THE "TOWNIES." — MY BROTHER.

THERE was one winter when sliding on Drag Hill became an uncertain and perilous pleasure. As with most boarding-school communities, collisions with the "townies" were not of unusual occurrence at all seasons; but heretofore in our school-life the townies had not proved very strong nor very frequent enemies, perhaps because of the fact that in our ranks were some old boys of mighty size and muscle, as well as pluck. But in the fall of the year I now write of, college, counting-room, and farm had taken from our number nearly all the big boys, and in our rambles through the village, and on Saturday picnics, the townies came to learn our weakness. "Halloo!" sometimes was our greeting from the butcher's steps or the steamboat omnibus, — "Halloo! Academies" (because our school was in a building formerly the County Academy), "where 's Bullock and Gracie? — don't see them with you swell-heads lately; and Grant, and that hammer-headed old Big Bones — what 's his name? I say, where are they all?" And we would answer, if in pretty strong force, "O! they were tired of this little jumping-off place.

There was no one left for them to whip, so they *cut*."

"Hold up, imperdence in buttons and blue!" (We wore a uniform of blue cloth and big buttons.) "Great Slingo! won't we just thrash some of you for that sass before you sees your mammas agen? Mind that, swellies!"

Old Mother Cracken, of whom we bought and ate mince-pies, buckwheat cakes, cheese, and candies on Saturdays, when flush with the week's spending-money, had a grandson about eighteen years of age, who had come home from somewhere that fall. I believe he had been a hand on a New York market-sloop. At any rate he was a rough-looking customer and seemed to have taken up his station now behind Mother Cracken's counter, where his only duty on Saturdays was, apparently, to rest his elbows between the pies, and eye us fellows threateningly and contemptuously, as we tried in most enthusiastic manner to ruin our stomachs and dispense our pennies. The last was comparatively easy on a weekly capital of twelve and a half cents. But the other was almost a vain experiment, and during my school experience I knew only three who succeeded in making themselves sick enough to be excused from church on Sunday morning. One was Dick Burram; but he got a dollar bill from his father, who had been up to see Dick the day before, and he burst Mrs. Cracken's buckwheat bank; he said he ate fifty-three cakes and a pint cup of molasses. Another was little Nelly Wrang; but then he had a very small and bilious stomach to commence with, and I think his free Sunday was only the commencement of the measles. But old Pudding Head did it once on the week's twelve and a half cents — thus: six and a half cents' worth of buckwheats — twenty-six cakes, and a teacup of molasses; three cents' worth of mince-pie — half of a pie; four cocoa-nut cakes and a glass of ginger-beer were then stowed away, at a cost of three more cents; and when we got back to the Academy and were passing through the dining-room hall-way, the housekeeper's store-room door stood open, disclosing to sight an uncovered pickle jar. In popped Pudding Head, and out he popped again with a mouth and two fists full of green cucumbers. He was *pretty sick.* I think he would have preferred going to church. And when Marley came from morning service that Sunday and saw the sick one lolling on the bed, he characterized his success as a sort of swindle. "Now look here, Pudding Head, your sick is a regular cheat. You never did that with your spending-money; you know that very well. It was Mrs. Hote's pickles, and that wasn't fair. Own up."

But I am losing sight of Mother Cracken's grandson in the steam of those Saturday feasts. I said his age was eighteen? Yes; but he was not tall for his years, only heavy, and what we used to call "spicy" looking. His cap always so far on one side you feared it would drop off, — a black, low-crowned cap, the top of which shone greasy with the bear's oil it had imbibed from Jack Cracken's hair. And how wonderfully were the anointed locks of Jake brought straight over his temples to the front. His broad, large-featured face, broadest at the mouth like a bulldog's, was red and rather pimpled. His eyes were sharp and humorous; but mouth and forehead wore such a strange scowl, we could never tell whether he was about to laugh or on the point of swearing. His chin protruded in the impudent way a prize-fighter's is supposed to do when, having his "counter" ready to let out, he looks at his adversary to tempt him to the attack, as if to say, "You can't touch my mug — no, you *can't*." Then there was the broad turn-over collar, low in the neck, and somewhat soiled, tied with an immense black silk handkerchief; no coat — shirt sleeves rolled up to his strong shoulders — the undershirt sleeves fitting tightly and reaching only to the elbow, to show the muscles above and below. His pantaloons were short in the waist, without suspenders, and always tucked in the boots. Even in the coldest weather he wore no coat, though often carrying one over his shoulder, perhaps for the convenience of tobacco plug and jackknife.

I am particular in describing Jake Cracken, because his portrait, first impressed on my memory as he loomed and lolled over the counter, the Harpy of our Saturday feasts, became soon afterward our dread. In Jake, "Spicy Jake," the townies found "the coming man," — one to make the Academies tremble; and we, to our sorrow, knew there was no one boy among us to stand successfully against Mother Cracken's grandson.

However, there were those among us who were not to be turned from any accustomed path or sport by fear of Spicy Jake or any other champion. Go they would to skate or slide or roam the village, whether the townies could whip them or not.

Bill Hazelteen, a handsome, average-sized, fairly formed, quiet-voiced boy from a Florida plantation, — an excellent fellow, — favorite with the girls because of his black eyes and pleasant manners, and favorite with masters and boys because of his decided character and upright principles, — first of all had no fear of Spicy Jake, and there were others also, companions of Bill in his independence.

What immunity, if any, Bill Hazelteen experienced from Jake's prowess, it is not my purpose just now to tell. That will come properly elsewhere.

Concerning the sliding? Jake robbed it of much pleasure for all of us, while some, rather than experience the constant annoyance of Jake and his low companions in snowballs, jokes, and thefts, stayed nearer home, where sliding was safer. The bullying misdemeanors of the townies, rejoicing in such a mighty leader, seldom led to a regular fight, — indeed only twice during that winter, — because as masses the townies and we were not very un-equally matched. Indeed, I think then we were the strongest. Moreover, we had Right on our side, therefore an intuitive confidence in our cause; and probably the townies acknowledged in their consciences the same fact, and though they may never have read the lines in Shakespeare's "Henry VI." —

> "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
> And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted," —

yet they *felt* them.

Sometimes they caught one of us alone on the top or at the bottom of the hill, and got off with such a one's sled before his companions could be summoned. The name being scratched off, the sled, repainted and renamed, would reappear in a week's time on the hill, the property of Spicy Jake's gang. They raced with us, and, being generally beaten, crowded us off the road, or else indulged their anger in oaths and threatenings. They took points on the hill-side and pelted us as we passed with snowballs — no, not always snowballs — too often, to our pain, were their missiles *ice*-balls. In a thousand ways they schemed to worry us.

Now, my brother Alfred was one of the younger boys in our school. His was a nature too gentle and refined for the coarseness and buffetings of a boarding-school world. At first in the new life he did not understand the oppressions and bullying that confronted him. He seemed not to comprehend why a blow should be his answer. Longing for home, confused and wounded by the strange treatment that met him, he bowed in a peaceable but perplexed way to the unkind usage of his companions. Boys are proverbially quick to read character. They soon discovered that there was not a line of either meanness or cowardice in the new boy's disposition, and, laughing at his innocence and mildness, let him alone.

Before the few years passed away in which they and he were school-mates together, the beauty of his character and the excellence of his mind were acknowledged. But a little event, which Spicy Jack had a hand in, first really introduced the under-spirit of Alf to his comrades. I have spoken of his gentleness ; I wish I could convey besides an idea of his sensitiveness to injustice, his sympathy with the weak and slandered, his susceptibility to everything genial or humorous ; his warm affections, his antipathy to quarrelings and even games depending on physical contest, and yet his courage. Modest and chivalrously upright, the boys and teachers knew him to be ; his bravery they were to discover from the scene with Spicy Jake, and from other incidents afterward occurring.

Alf was among those who forsook the coasting on Drag Hill because of Jake and his comrades. As the winter went on, and each evening brought another report of some new outrage, theft, or challenge, most of those who now coasted on the hills near school feared more and more to venture again on Drag Hill, or congratulated themselves on their discretion in having beaten a retreat long ago; but not so Alf. His blood was stirred, and, pondering over what he heard and what he felt, he could not sleep at night, but tossed on his bed, questioning himself as to whether he were really *afraid* of those townies, stung by a sense of the injustice of such oppression, apprehensive lest the honor of the school might be in jeopardy.

Alf's bed was next to mine, and his restlessness awoke me one night. "Alf," I said, "what in the mischief is the matter? Why don't you go to sleep?"

There was no answer until I had repeated the question, and then he replied in a troubled voice, "O Charley, I can't sleep — if — if I am afraid of Spicy Jake! What a bully he must be! Charley, *I shall go to Drag Hill with you to-morrow.* Good-night!"

"Good-night, Alf; but I don't know what you mean."

The next afternoon, after school hours and dinner, when Marley and Bill Hazelteen and some half a dozen more were starting for Drag Hill, Alf pulled his sled off with theirs.

"Halloa Alf," said Marley, "you going? Why, I thought you were one of those who were willing to let that mince-pie and buckwheat cake grandson drive us off Drag Hill. I thought you belonged to the philosophers, who had chosen the better part of valor."

We all laughed but Alf, who blushed, and only answered, "Did you?"

As we walked on and drew near the hill, Bill Hazelteen said, "Boys, Jake and his chaps are getting pretty troublesome. They seem to be spoiling for a regular row; but I think we had better keep quietly on, paying no attention to their blackguardism until they try to really *rub it in;* then — well, all I have got to say is, that if Jake can lick me, he *can*, but I sha'n't *stay* licked; and if you all say the same, forty Spicy Jakes can never drive us off Drag Hill."

There they were on the Hill before us, — about ten fellows, — Jake smoking a cigar that afternoon; all coasting. Among the sleds it was easy to recognize three which had once been ours.

As we were about ready for the first course, the townies returned to the top from their descent.

"My eyes! here is them 'cademy swell-heads agen," sang out one; "come for a *nice* time, I guess. Don't they wish they may get it?"

"Hi!" said another, flapping his arms against his sides and crowing like a small hoarse Bantam rooster before he spoke, — "Hi! what a rummy chicken that is," pointing to Alf; "don't remember to have sot eyes on him afore. Just look at his *comb*, will you?" At which his comrades set up a shout, for Alf had on one of those scarlet hood-hats that were then getting fashionable in the cities, but which rather astonished country eyes.

Alf was off on his sled before the joke had died away, but in the volley of snowballs following us, one hit with some force the most attractive target — Alf's red cap.

In returning up the hill, Alf led the way with his sled, and on it he had placed a heavy log of wood which he had found and rolled on at the bottom of the hill.

"Why," said Bill Hazelteen, bursting into a laugh as he saw Alf's load and the quick way he was travelling up hill, — "why, Alf, what are you about with that great log?"

"O, nothing much, Hazelteen," replied Alf; but I noticed that his face looked very set and pale, and that his words had a hardness in them I had never known before; "I am only going to keep my side of the road going up, and I sha'n't be driven into the snow by those rowdies. If they want to try running down my sled, let them do it — that 's all."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Hazelteen, "our 'chicken,' as the townies call him, is a *game* chicken. Who would have thought it? But, Alf, here they come full tilt, and I wouldn't be the *causa belli*. I wouldn't make the first *overt* act."

"I sha'n't. I leave that to them," and before Alf's answer was done, the townies were only half a gunshot off, shouting, "Out of the way, you swells! Off in the snow, I say, or we'll smash you to tinder!"

But Alf only moved far enough on one side to give the townies a sight of the log on his sled. It was enough. The rowdies steered back to their own side of the course, and dashed by, one after another, savage with rage, and swearing like pirates.

As we advanced to the top of the hill, and turned occasionally to notice our antagonists, who had finished the coast and started to plod up again, we noticed that they came slowly, and clustered together as they walked. Half way up, where there was a small curve in the road, they halted, and we saw them, in a moment, busy making snowballs, with which, from their chosen field of attack, to punish us, on our way down, for Alf's assertion of rights.

"Well, we must run the blockade as best we may," said one of us, when all were ready for another coast. "Come on!"

"Look here!" Alf spoke up, addressing himself to Marley and him who had said "Come on;" "you two go first, will you, as if you were racing? Draw the townies' attention. Then let me go next, and as soon as I am off, the rest of you follow, and do as I do, will you?"

"Why?" I asked, "what 's the idea, Alf?"

"No matter! you'll see; come, let 's be off!"

"Agreed," we said; and away went Marley and the other fellows with a hard run and slam. Alf followed with a plucky look in his face that argued mischief. The rest of us went after, close together, and a few rods behind him.

Do you know the stirring, delicious sensation — the sort of whir and tingle — that courses through veins and brains as you rush with a locomotive's speed down a steep, hard-beaten, ice-varnished hill, the whiz of the wind, the trees and fences tearing by, the sparkling glitter of the snow underneath? Do you know it? If so, you know a very wholesome, jolly excitement; and so we dashed along like a troop of noiseless cavalry on a charge.

Ahead we saw the two racers just passing the enemy, and the white storm that greeted them. It seemed as if they must be hit on every inch of their bodies. In a second more they were making ready for us, Spicy Jake, the central figure, being the most active. But — in the same second, Alf, instead of following the usual road-curve around where our adversaries stood, had steered directly across it, and his sled struck Spicy Jake low in the calves, and cast him, as the railroad engine's cow-catcher would strike a beast from the track, far on one side. We followed on the enemy's ground, and scattered the astonished townies, hurling them off their feet in a manner that crowned Alf's idea with brilliant success. The bottom of our coast was reached, and we looked at Alf and at each other as if to say, "How quickly it was all done!" but there was no time to laugh or rejoice over the deed yet.

Bill Hazelteen spoke first. "We must, probably, fight our way home. Let 's start up the hill now, and boldly. Keep together — do your best

—and don't give in. Jake will want to get at you, Alf, but he sha'n't. I'm his boy."

Up and forward we went, but—hurrah!—there was no more fight in the townies that afternoon. One fellow's leg was too badly hurt for any more walking that afternoon, and they were pulling him home on a sled as fast as two others could do it. Spicy Jake had a badly sprained ankle and a scratched face. He was limping along, helping himself by the shoulder of a comrade. The remainder had only suffered tumbles, and what they call in the army "demoralization." But the cursing and threatenings that assailed us as we came up to and passed our late oppressors! "—— you *carrion*," yelled Spicy Jake, perfectly blue in his scratched face with rage, and shaking his fist at us, "if I had a pistol I would blow the brains out of your swell-heads as quick as look at you! Never mind, in a week's time won't I give you ——?" I omit the oaths.

The redoubtable townies disappeared, and we were left to the full enjoyment of the hill. No sooner had our enemies gone than Bill Hazelteen rushed up to Alf with a handful of snow and washed his face therewith, shouting out, "We name thee, most plucky young one, Game Chicken!" and then with his strong arms he pinioned Alf's from behind, and, making his blushing, smiling, sensitive face front the rest of us, proposed three cheers for our Game Chicken.

I tell you we gave them with a roar that probably reached the discomfited townies.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLEY BALCH'S METAMORPHOSIS.

THE first two years of Charley Balch's boarding-school career were in singular contrast to the last two. We were *new* boys together. I remember distinctly his manner and appearance the first afternoon of our rawness and discomfort in the scenes so strange and rough to both of us. He was thirteen years of age. His face and figure were good enough, without anything to remark in either; but there was an air of dullness, seclusion, and indifference in his expression and attitudes which seemed strange in a *boy*, and among so much noise and excitement, — for we new-comers were surrounded by a crowd of fellows who were hazing the green ones unmercifully. He sat at a desk, his head leaning on one hand, while with the other he was drawing grotesque faces on the fly-leaf of a new grammar book, given to him but a few hours before. Sometimes he slowly answered the tormentors' cross-questioning; and at other times made no replies, seeming to be unconscious that he was not alone.

In overhauling my four years of acquaintanceship with Charley Balch, that I may correctly tell the story of the great change that the boy under-went, — a change like that of the pure carbon evolving from the charcoal to the diamond, or of fine steel worked out of the rude iron, — I have naturally recalled these first impressions of my school-mate.

It is the in-door or moral life of boarding-school that we see now, — the part deeper, more important perhaps, certainly more difficult to reach and to treat of than the sports and interests out of doors. An old fellow, who yet feels the influences and remembers the struggles and wounds, the victories and defeats, of those few years long ago, will be made very happy if, in what he relates, any boy may find advice or encouragement; if any teacher or parent may take heart again in his endeavors for the training of a *hard case*.

No sensible boy, of course, thinks of boyhood, whether at home or at a boarding-school, as merely a long, jolly time of all sorts of fun, — ball-playing, boating, bathing, coasting, riding, and jokes. He supposes that there must be many discomforts and deprivations, though he may not perhaps realize the fact that it is a time of trial — trial that hurts as much and makes or mars more than that in after life.

Vieux Moustache is a common title among French soldiers for a comrade who has seen some service; who has, perhaps, a piece of lead in a limb, a sabre scar across another; who likes to tell his stories and sing his songs, as he smokes by the bivouac fire; who is proud of his profession, and loves a fellow-soldier, old or young, but for the recruit particularly, has a very tender spot in his heart. Morbleu! I can't see him go wrong; what! not help him because he is a *recruit?* Why, that *recruit* our regiment may, some day, glory in." He curls his moustache savagely at the idea. It is all very well to be a jolly comrade, but if he is also a true soldier, he must honestly befriend those recruits; tell them, if roughly, yet kindly, what to avoid and what to strive for, and as Beranger's old corporal sings, —

"Mais pour vous tous, jeunes soldats,
J'étais un père á l'exercice."

So here, one who cannot relinquish the pleasures of youth, and loves to talk of its sports and adventures, would also, as a true friend and helper to those whose experience is to be won, remember the in-door and in-spirit successes and humiliations, rewards and scars, uprisings and downfalls; and recount them with the earnest hope that they may prove warnings, hints, and counsel in the mental and moral dangers with which the young soldier in life has always to contend. And now, with this intention, is this story of Charley Balch, — this brief account of how, after long moral skulking and cowardice, without pride in his work, and sustaining only shame and defeat, he stepped by brave effort into the front rank, and there won love and applause, besides the reward of an approving conscience.

According to age and the account boys gave of what had been their studies before entrance to the school, new boys received appointments to the different classes, and so Charley Balch, with others, commenced his studies; but at the close of the first month Charley fell back one month in each of his lessons. Up to that time no one had seemed to notice this new boy. Of course, the teachers, or some of them, were watching with interest to learn his character and his talents, but his schoolmates merely recognized that there was such a boy among their number. He had made neither friends nor enemies. He was neither bullied nor adopted by the old boys. There appeared nothing either to admire or dislike in him. He said little and did less. Sometimes he knew his lessons imperfectly and recited them dully, but generally he was deficient, and attempted no excuse for his failures. In study hours he rarely perused the printed pages of his books, but found interest in the fly-sheets, which were soon filled with pencil sketches, all sorts of hideous or grotesque scenes and figures. In recitations, he drew on his finger-nails or shirt-cuffs, without any seeming interest in the matter before the class. Out of school-hours he was to be seen stretched on some back seat in the study-hall, or beneath a distant tree in the orchard, poring over the romances of Walter Scott, or the warm fancies and delightful humor of Washington Irving; sometimes we found him playing marbles by himself, and whistling as he played. At other times he loafed, leaning against a comfortable fence, or the soft side of a stone building, and watched the tree-tops, apparently with much pleasure to himself; for I have come upon him suddenly thus, and found him smiling, or laughing outright. If we made any remark at all about the new school-fellow, it was, "What a no-account that Balch is;" or, "Did you ever see such a lubber?"

When he was put back in all his studies at the close of the first month, he felt the disgrace, I think, for he grew more reserved in manner and displayed to some extent a new trait, — sulkiness. Among his room-mates he added to his former quiet and dullness, moroseness; and beside the punishment of making up deficient recitations, he was sometimes now reprimanded for surly answers to his teachers. He seldom joined in any games, and when he did, it was without spirit. Now how stood Charley Balch's case at that point? With only a name in the school; uncared for by his companions, despaired of by his teachers, with no heart in work or play. Why was it so? To tell you briefly. His father, an active politician, and seldom with his family, lost his wife two years after Charley was born. In a few years more he married again a foolish, useless young woman, who, not fancying her step-son because of his unattractive appearance and apparent dullness, soon grew to be jealous of her husband's first child, and to neglect him when children of her own came into the home. Without a mother's care and love, and without the guidance of a father's, his childhood knew neither warmth nor training. His schools were ill-chosen, and his character left to form itself. Advice or sympathy he seldom received. Naturally reserved and diffident, he grew, from the force of circumstances, selfish and idle. His only real pleasures were those gained from the books he happened on, from the paper his pencil had such power over, and from his natural love of brooks, fields, skies, and trees.

And so he came among us. Sent away from home to make way for the comfort of the young family, his half-brothers and sisters, he felt the injustice, and naturally regarded boarding-school as his prison-house, and his opportunities of education as punishment to be borne, not privileges to be improved. All was wrong with the poor fellow. How few are so unfortunate! When perhaps he really tried, as well as former habits permitted, to do his tasks, and was unable, because of bad training, to keep up with his class, he sank into a worse state, apathy and sullenness, as if he had thought: "What is the use of trying? Everything is against me. I hate study. I shall just give up, and trust to luck."

All his first term was made up of indolence and punishment, until he grew almost callous to shame or reproof. Among so many gay, noisy companions, he was comparatively alone; the object neither of respect nor affection, only of indifference. Selfishness increased, pride diminished, and the boy's character was suffering, as a neglected field from want of tilling, — the ground getting hard and crusty, and overgrown with weeds.

With vacation there came no summons to home; no! his father having business in Washington, and his mother preferring to have the big boy away from her little ones, he was to remain at the boarding-school. He did not mind that much, for without any studies he could manage to enjoy himself in novels, sketches, dreams, and rambles. But unfortunately again for poor Charley, he was not to be alone; one of the worst boys in the school was to remain also as a boarder until school recommenced. This was Ben Barry, from Galveston, Texas. He stayed, because to have gone home and returned would have consumed two thirds of the vacation. Now Ben Barry differed altogether from Charley Balch. He stood fairly in his classes, not from much study, but because of his natural "smartness." He understood, too, every way of cheating a teacher; having keys to his arithmetic and algebra, *ponies* (as translations are called by boys) to his Latin, and cheap and dishonorable means of deceiving his tutors and *cheating himself* in all his tasks. He was not a vulgar boy, nor was he perhaps intentionally wicked. He was not wanting in generosity, physical courage, and kind-heartedness; but he was totally without good principles or nobleness of thought or action. He was full of tricks, mischief, and falsehood; yet such an amusing fellow was he, and such a good hand in all games and exercises, that he was popular among most of us. His influence in the school was certainly very bad; for those younger and weaker in character than Barry looked up to him, and were inclined to be led by the example and accept the opinions of such a smart, jolly fellow, who was neither dunce, bully, nor coward. He spoke with constant disrespect of teachers and regulations, and with ridicule and contempt of religion. Yet these dangerous, miserable scoffs of his were so laughingly thrown out, that their results were the more disastrous. As I have said before, his badness was not aggressive; he did not intend any result. His jokes and jeers at everything noble and good were because of the littleness and baseness of his soul.

Charley Balch and Ben Barry were spending the summer vacation together at school. There were no tasks to master, no long hours of study, no trial hours of recitation. The only rules to restrict them were those requiring them to rise at six and retire at nine, and always to be present with the Principal's family at morning and evening prayers. Thrown together so much, companionship was inevitable, and soon the two boys, who for five months had hardly exchanged as many words, got to be intimate associates. Barry's tact and good-nature thawed Balch's reserve, and the latter, for the first time in his life, found a friend in one he had admired for school success and popularity. So they had many long days of rambling in the woods, paddling in leaky boats about the shores of the Hudson, swimming, loafing around the orchard, and in many other pleasant ways consulting only their own inclinations. But Barry's pernicious influence was making itself felt. He enjoyed airing his wit in ridicule of master and tutors, and finding an applauding laugh to reward such essays. Then he would lead Balch to caricature with his pencil the originals of these descriptions. Again Barry would make fun of Balch for failure in his lessons, when a little of what he styled "*fair* cheatery and brass" could carry him through decently; "and," he would say, "I will put you up to a dodge or two." So he taught, until Charley got new conceptions of his situation, and began to plan within himself how he would manage in the new term to take an easier and higher place without doing a jot more of work so difficult and distasteful to him. On one subject, however, he never agreed with Barry, nor listened to him with pleasure. That was when he laughed about "those old-granny prayers, such humbuggery twice a day," and said he never knew a religious boy who was not a *soft* and a coward; and that, as for himself, he couldn't stand such flummery in church or out of church. Now Charley had had but little religious instruction in his life, but beneath his un-promising exterior, beneath his selfishness and indolence, there was that spark of inestimable value in the boy's or man's character, that spark from which Hope can light when all else has gone to ashes, — I mean reverence, enthusiasm to be kindled at the sight, or hearing, or thought of the noble, the beautiful, the heroic, the self-sacrificing, — and in his rough, ignorant, groping, boyish way, he felt that far beyond the noblest pages of his best-loved romances was even *his* conception of the Gospel story. Though he could not remember his own mother, he must have thought, too, of her as in that heaven beyond the skies. Perhaps some indistinct vision or fancy of his mother clasping his infant hands together made the act of prayer pleasant to him. At any rate there was something awfully grand and beautiful in what he saw, believed, and imagined in the worship of God. Ignorantly he felt that he could be but an outsider — only a reverent looker-on at religious observances and privileges. No wonder, then, that he heard Ben Barry's jokes and contemptuous sarcasms with pain.

Had it not been for those occasional jeers of Ben Barry on that one subject, his influence would have been more deeply riveted on Charley Balch's character. As it was, it went far enough, and showed its bad fruits in the new term, getting Charley deeper in the mire of wrong-doing and indifference. The new term began, and brought the two boys again under the discipline of school-life. Balch, noticed now by his vacation friend, lost some reserve and coldness, and mixed more freely with the other boys, but his companions were generally the black sheep. Because, perhaps, of Ben Barry's "dodge or two," Charley had risen a few grades in his classes: otherwise, he remained in his former mental and moral "slough of despond." When not in study or recitation, he was novel-reading, or drawing, or loafing, and seldom joining in any games more energetic than marbles.

With a third term, he took a few more short steps forward in his studies, or rather in some of them; in composition, rising even to the middle of the class. But, as if to balance such improvement, he fell back socially, and became one of the ten or dozen hardened subjects — and there is such a forlorn band in every school community — who are always stumbling over laws, and coming in one way and another to constant punishment and disgrace; who are without affection for their teachers, without pride in their institution, and who are generally tabooed from the best sets in the school society. The only known recommendation or claim he then had, outside of his own intimates, was his talent as a draughtsman. That saved him from general ostracism.

His desk, book, slate — everything available that came in his way — were covered with his drawings. Beside the caricatures he was turning off continually, there were illustrations of what he read, and comical histories in pencil of the adventures of different personages of his imagination — as John Gilpins and the Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson we are told of in sketches, — and sometimes he drew in continuation, as his personal histories, stories of travel — like that of the celebrated "Voyage en Zig Zag." On leaves of his Algebra were representations of Legendre under different torments. In his Grammar poor Lindley Murray was seen hanging in the margin of one page, the cross beam of his gibbet being one of his own hard rules. On another page he was found trampled under foot by an ugly crowd of embodied words. But Charley Balch's Virgil! — can you not recall the large, old-fashioned school edition with wide margins? On the fly-leaf was Priam's death, full of horrible spirit. Dido on her funeral pile occupied the blank leaf at the back. Portraits of Anchises, Ganymede, Jove himself (those ambrosial locks curling into the verses), Helen, Venus, Æneas, Polyphemus, Ascanius, you turned to here and there. Heroes, gods, goddesses, chariots, suits of armor, and scenes of valor were mingled together, filling the margins with strange illumination. All these passed around among the boys, exciting much interest and laughter. Of course it was frequently said, "Well, how strange it is that so dull a fellow can imagine and draw such splendid things." I know now that often and anxiously did our good and earnest Principal ponder how to get at the mine beneath the cold, barren surface soil. He knew that Charley was not the stupid boy he appeared.

It was not until another term, Charley's fourth term, that we discovered a new talent of his, that, when known, gave him a certain amount of esteem throughout the school, notwithstanding and in spite of his indifferent character in other respects. Perhaps this faculty I would tell of, as it brought him into the companionship of many of the finest fellows in the school, helped him to his after change. These good examples he must have profited by, and seeing the contrast of their lives to his, and the difference between these manly, honorable boys and those he generally moved among, his pride and good sentiments and his *good sense*, too, must have been stirred and prepared for the good seed which afterward fell, to bring forth abundant fruit.

At the commencement of the fourth term, Charley Balch's bed was changed to the room in which I was the youngest boy. The others were rather indignant that a fellow of such indifferent standing in the school as Balch should be put among them — old boys of good repute in their classes and in the play-ground. I think our Principal's object was to separate Charley in some measure from his associates, and bring him under the influence of those who, though often wild chaps, had the fair name of the school and themselves at heart, and had a standard of honor which rebuked all meanness or school-disloyalty.

However that may have been, Charley became our room-mate. For a time he was merely tolerated; but one night when we were telling stories, as was often the case after the tutors had retired and the lamps were put out, and even I had been called upon and had furnished my contribution, some one called out, "Balch, are you asleep?" — "No," was the reply. "Well, then, we will *let* you try a yarn: can you?" — "I don't know, but I don't care to; I would rather listen." — "No matter what you want to do; go ahead and give us a story;" and he did go ahead with by far the best one that had ever been heard in our room. We were all astonished, and the question was immediately put, "Where did you get that from?" "Out of my head," was the answer; to which followed the chorused satirical echo, — "Out of *your* head! Humbug!" But he had spoken truly, and many a night of that term did as good and better stories come from that head and heart; and from his memory, too, he gave us spiritedly, feelingly, and accurately the best romances, continued from night to night, of his worshipped Walter Scott and the legends of his equally loved Washington Irving. There, too, we heard "Jack Shepard," and "Lafitte," and "The Flying Dutchman," and many others, that I never think of now as printed stories, but as if they were Charley's own, so strongly were they renewed in his enthusiastic, absorbed manner, and his sympathetic voice. The circumstances, too, under which they were told added to the enduring effect they made; ourselves, each in his bed, listening intently while looking out through the uncurtained windows on the sky sparkling with stars, or on the weird clouds driving by, or watching the rain or snow pattering against the glass; our bodies resting, our minds charmed, the spell of the story weaving itself mysteriously from that low voice (for any loud utterance would have brought the tutors down upon us to put a stop to that forbidden pleasure of conversation after "lamps out"), until we lived in the scenes and persons of other lands and other times. Of course, Charley gained a reputation, and soon became the school's "circulating library of light literature," as Ben Barry called him.

Again Charley Balch was to remain at the school through a vacation; only a short one, to be sure, but it was that one which is always so precious at home, — the Christmas vacation. It seemed hard, very hard, that through those ten days set aside in all Christian lands for rejoicing and the interchange of all kindly feelings; that through that pleasant time of family reunions, charitable deeds, cheerful hearth-stones, bounteous tables, and merry games, Charley must remain at school, the only one of his sixty schoolmates unbidden home. Ben Barry had finished his days of boarding-school, and gone, to return no more.

Charley was alone in the halls and play-grounds, alone in his bed-room, alone everywhere except at prayers and meal-times. After the hum and bustle of so much life, how drearily sounded the echoes of his footsteps on the long, bare stairways; with what a hollow bang did the covers startle him as he went from one to another of his school-mates' desks, finding desolate reminders of yesterday's companionship, — here in a disordered heap of books lying in crumbs and apple-parings; there where everything was clean and properly arranged; and again where torn pages, holes cut through the desk bottom, and a broken jack-knife, recalled some fellow both idle and careless. On the inside top of one desk, that of one of the smallest boys, he saw a sketch of his own tacked up; in another he startled a mouse from a feast of candy remnants. And so the lonely boy went from desk to desk of those who were now forgetful of school tasks and happy at home, every step and every hour adding to the sadness of his heart, until, when he came to lay himself down at night after the dreary winter day, and thought of what his home might and should be to him, the tears trickled down to his pillow. There was nothing to console him; the sashes rattled, the howling wind called at the cracks and keyholes, and rumbled threateningly in the chimneys.

So ended the second boarding-school year of Charley's life, and so began his Christmas vacation.

The next day was Sunday, — a clear, cold, beautiful day, the snow covering everything. The scene, so bright and exhilarating, cheered Charley's spirits as he looked out in the morning. With the Principal's family and two of the teachers who remained through the vacation, Charley went to church. Now this day was a memorable one in his life, for he heard some truth that he had never thought of before. He heard words that passed not away when the preacher's half hour was ended, but awakened interest and inquiry in the boy's mind. They were heard, though perhaps but indistinctly comprehended, as voices calling to us while we are asleep. Now I am not going to repeat a sermon, or try to explain exactly how it affected Charley Balch, but it was the first one that ever thoroughly interested him and kept his attention fixed from beginning to end. The text was, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," and the aim of the discourse was to show the preciousness of every moment of a man's life, and its nobleness and happiness when passed in striving to do whatever was appointed for his hands to do, as under the Lord's eye and for his service and approval, *not men's.* There was one sentence I must quote, as among those that set his mind to serious activity, and served greatly to give the boy new and rich ideas of the responsibility of life, and of the necessity of earnestness, whether in work or play. It was: "It is absolutely certain, then, that there is no single waking moment of our life which we can afford to lose. Never was a truer line written by any poet than that of Young, —

> "'The man
> Is yet unborn who duly weighs an hour.'

Probably there is no such thing as an indifferent moment, — a moment in which our characters are not being secretly shaped by the bias of the will, either for good or evil. It is a great mystery, but so it is, that our eternity is suspended upon the manner in which we pass through a very short span of time. And, analogously, this very short span of time takes its complexion from the moments which go to make it up. If life itself be of such tremendous import, its constituent hours and minutes cannot be insignificant. All minutes must be made available; not indeed available in one particular form, not available in the way of work, but all available in the service of God, to which both work and diversion may contribute."

Charley Balch could not cease thinking of what he had heard. Really a new world, as it were, opened to him. He had never thought of life, works, play, except as he thought of school, lessons, and marbles, — some as troublesome, some amusing, — all chance matters of small importance. But now his mind was full, astonished, and bewildered, for the interest awakened was as a tune imperfectly caught, yet humming constantly and fatiguingly in the ears.

The boy's mind was stirred, his heart touched. The change had commenced.

Let us hasten on, for the space is limited in which to tell how the heavy chains of apathy and idleness fell off; how he started up and set himself zealously to work and to play, with high principles to guide him and bring rewards.

The next day he was pulling his sled through the village, to have it repaired at the blacksmith's, and as he walked along, turning over the new subject in his mind, he was from that led on to think of the minister, — whether he did not lead a hard, dry life; whether he ever enjoyed himself as much as other people; whether he ever laughed or cried over a novel; and he wondered too, how, if life was such a serious affair, he could ever have a cheerful, easy moment. As he was pondering over all these things, there came a jerk on his hand holding the sled-rope, and, turning suddenly, he saw the subject of his thoughts standing with one foot on the sled and smiling with fun at his astonishment.

Before Charley found words, the clergyman said, "So you are the only boy left at the academy; nevertheless, I wish you a Merry Christmas for to-morrow. I saw you in church yesterday, and could not help remembering how I was left alone at school once through a Christmas vacation. By the way, I have not had a slide since those days, twelve years ago. Won't you let me go to some hill with you and try the fun again?"

Of course Charley Balch said Yes, determining to postpone repairs on the sled until his return.

So they went off together, and Charley enjoyed as pleasant two hours as he had ever had with any of his school-mates. In that short time, so strongly did this new friend gain Charley's confidence, that, sensitive and retiring as the boy was naturally, he found himself talking to the clergyman of things he had never spoken of to any of his comrades. In all, the man gave cheerful sympathy and advice, and soon the boy had even asked explanations of some of the perplexities in yesterday's sermon. The meeting, so valuable to Charley, ended by the clergyman's shaking hands heartily with him, and begging that he would come and see him.

That simple incident did as much for Charley as the sermon had the day previous. It made for him a friend, who remained his helper and adviser for years after. It brought him in contact with one who had a heart to feel for a boy struggling amid the dangers and ignorance of youth, a mind to discover quickly the real underlying worth of the boy, and the tact to draw it out and set it on the right path.

As the traveller, long lost in his journey because of the fog shutting out the view on all sides, suddenly feels a puff of breeze come to freshen him and lift the curtain from the landscape, showing to his eager eyes the spires of some hospitable hamlet, so Charley Balch, having become aware of his cloudy, aimless, groping state, saw, within a few days, the mists clearing away before his sight, and discovered a point whereby to set his course.

Of what inestimable importance were those Christmas holidays to Charley. Good influences had reached his heart, his eyes were opening, he had made a friend, — a wise and true friend. Twice during that vacation did he visit the clergyman. The first call was turned into a skate together on the Hudson; the second was made a long sleigh-ride many miles back into the country, where Mr. Clinton, Charley's new friend, had to visit a sick parishioner. Mr. Clinton was a boy in overflowing spirits and freshness of feeling, but he was a man in work and wisdom. To a rare knowledge of the human heart and character, he joined a warm, loving interest in every one he could assist. And he had the tact to reach many a pain that was hidden from others, and the gentlemanly delicacy which could aid without offending. Charley laughed and enjoyed himself, but often his feelings were deeply interested. All his tastes and sentiments and hopes, the new friend discovered: his faults and perplexities were bared to the gaze of one who was able and happy to help him.

Charley read very little at this period, but he was busy thinking and thinking, while, pencil in hand, he drew he knew not what, tearing up sheet after sheet as fast as each was filled with sketches.

In the afternoon of the day before the New Year, there commenced a terrible winter storm. Up in the third-story hall of the school was a couch in a window-place looking over the river upon and beyond the hills of Rockland, while one could see up and down the Hudson for many miles. Charley, kept in-doors by the storm, went loitering through the almost deserted house, now full of sounds, — the clattering of windows and the roars and shrieks of the gale. Arrived at the upper hall, where, in addition to the other wild noises, could be heard the rattling of the tin roof, swept and battered by the gusts, Charley threw himself down in the window-place, and looked out on the storm. Evening prayers were forgotten, tea hour unheeded, and everything of the present lost and drowned in the thoughts that drove as wildly through his mind as the winds and clouds raced in fierce disorder down on the river and up through the hills. There was sadness, because of the want of affectionate parents; there were grief and shame, because of his miserably used school-life; despair, because of his want of love and respect and character among comrades and teachers. There were, too, the hopes and aims he now felt contending with the past. There were wounded pride, duty, ambition. There were young but noble aspirations; ah! and there were unuttered prayers swelling his heart. Who was to guide and comfort the poor troubled boy, with only his bitter thoughts and the hopeless storm for companionship. Was he to be crushed by the past, to give up and sink back, be lost in despair, and return to the darkness through which the rays of light had shone? *No!* The good words of a few days ago were bursting in his soul as good seeds do in the warm soil; the strength, sympathy, and cheerfulness of the man who had held out the hand of help and friendship to the boy, were watering. Would not God give the increase?

What divine chord was it, that, struck by a skillful hand, sounded within him until the whole instrument was tuned to concord? and is there not within us all, at least before time and the world have rusted them, the keys that, if fingered with love and earnestness, will resound with melody and gladness?

The busy hum of school-life commenced again. Tasks, routine, and discipline, after the indulgences and recreation of Christmas holidays, were borne restlessly at first. The harness chafed, but habit was soon resumed, and away rolled the big fifty-horse coach over the rough roads. Some steeds, bearing on collars and bits, taking their load bravely; others with life and strength enough, but kicking, prancing, and shying, now in a trot and then in a gallop. A few were panting and striving, yet doing little for want of strength to do more; and some lazy, back-eared colts hung dull in their harness, indifferent to the whip, and unmoved by the spirit of their fellows. Among these last in the team was not Charley Balch on that New Year journey; no, but to the astonishment of the school and delight of the teachers, he was at work, and how hard he had to work; how distasteful it was; and yet at it he kept. Success and reward could not come in a day, a week, or a month. Good resolves must be tried and tempered in difficulties and distress. But if there were troubles to contend with, there were encouragements to incite. Teachers proffered assistance. The much-loved Principal, whose friendly notice was an honorable badge, now stopped sometimes for a few pleasant words with the hard-striving boy; and the head fellows began to treat Charley Balch with some regard and consideration. Those were the sweeteners of his toil, — to win respect and affection. Mr. Clinton was not the only one to befriend him now.

So Charley went on, higher and higher, his character and manners improving, his disposition growing cheerful. Rising above the old quagmire, walking on high, dry ground now, liked and respected, he gained confidence and ease with all the boys, and was soon as interested in all out-door sports as he was earnest in his in-door tasks.

Wonderful was the change. Even the boy's appearance was altered and improved. He who was once dull, idle, unknown, and uncared for, was now a gay comrade in play, a hard student at his tasks, and an honorable, high-minded fellow everywhere. It is in these last two years of his boarding-school career that we, sometimes in these pages, meet Charley Balch on the coast and in the play-ground.

Let us, boys and men, remember how much a few earnest words, a few warm, kind acts may effect. Think how many live on, shut up in hopeless error and darkness, for want of the one charitable, gentle fellow-being to come close with words or deeds and be the honest, cheerful brother and friend. There is something good and hopeful in the worst of men or boys. Blow that spark but gently and wisely with the breath of affection, and we may light up a fire to warm and save the one who seemed dead to all good.

CHAPTER V.

SPRING SPORTS. — BEN BARRY INCITING TROUBLE. — THE REBELLION.

THE winter sports of boarding-school were generally drowned out by the early thaws, and their successors of rain and mud. Out-of-doors lost its attractions. Then was the time for colds in the head, sore throats, and study. The boys settled down, sneezing and wheezing, to their tasks; and the energy that awhile ago found outlets in skating and sliding, was now directed to the mastering of Latin and Greek, to competition for prizes in French composition, to cramming History, and to good hard work in the other branches of the school-course. There were the eagerly sought nominations for parts in the debates and other honors of our great yearly exhibition. Charley Balch, now become the Academy poet, might be seen at divers hours of the day scratching his head for rhymes and figures; and half a score of young debaters, who were to represent and defend the different professions, or the rival nations of the world, or the celebrated characters of history, recklessly splashed ink about, and squeaked their quills as if many a weighty verdict hovered ready to alight. How vast and important, how engrossing the interests of those yearly contests were to us then; and now that Time unkindly holds the optic-glass reversed, how small and amusing they appear! Some of us have, perhaps, since those days, been applauded in the lecture-desk or senate; or written our blue and gold volume of poems; or directed our many hundred men in the smoke and fire of battle. And yet, minute and insignificant as may appear those school-day successes in comparison, were they not as real and far sweeter even than these later honors?

The season of hard study continued until the reveries and enchantments of budding spring came to make confinement in school-rooms with the hard realities of mathematics, languages, and, indeed, all the prose of industry and work, seem dull and wearisome.

One of the first of spring games was kite-flying. When that became the rage, wash-room and gymnasium were full and noisy enough in the after-school hours, and on Saturdays. Penknives and paste, cord and paper, rags and sticks, lay in dire confusion. A dozen kites were in course of construction at one and the same time, — Eagle-kites, bow-kites, Chinese-kites, square-kites, and kites of every kind, — rods and rods of tail, miles of twine, gallons of paste.

Of a Saturday at such times, some one of our number, supposed to possess culinary talent, officiated with a long poker, frying sausages through the open door of the stove or furnace. Another would be toasting cheese, while the workers, seated on benches or the floor, kept an eye constantly on the movements of our cooks, and — as the cheerful, sizzling splutter, and the savory scents of the frying viands greeted our senses — sang and whistled merrily, or shouted jokes and orders to the gentlemen of the kitchen. There were many good choruses on these occasions, rousing jokes, sharp appetites, good digestions, occasionally a fight, and lots of fun.

Another amusement much the rage every spring was carpentry. The mechanical geniuses went to work as regularly and energetically to make chips as the trees to make leaves. When the weather permitted, the tool-chests were opened out-doors; at other times the play-room and wash-house resounded to hammering, sawing, and the paring whe-er of planes. Book-cases, writing-desks with secret drawers, lounging seats for favorite trees in the orchard, and all sorts of cabinet work and building were accomplished while the chip-fever continued. Marley, our king of artificers, once made a boat, easy to row, perfectly water-tight, and so light that two of us could shoulder it and make it a useful assistant in Saturday tramps. But the spring of the big kite, Nelly Wrang — who, though not so good a workman as Marley, was very ingenious in ideas and contrivances — astonished us one day by erecting the frame of a house (about fourteen feet by six) in a corner of the orchard, and against the trunk of an old dead apple-tree. For that he had permission from Mr. Norris, and to procure the necessary funds for such large investment in lumber and nails, he formed a club to meet the expenses and enjoy together the comforts of the proposed house. In a few days it advanced rapidly to completion — board over board, joists and shingles, nails and hinges, and finally a door and lock. There it stood, one afternoon, completed, and consequential little Nelly Wrang, turning the key in the lock, surveyed his handiwork with an air that said as plainly as words to us spectators, "There, I would like to see that job beaten; don't you outsiders wish you belonged to the club?"

In a month's time more, four other shanties occupied corners and fence-sides of the orchard. Even now, a wet spring day recalls to my memory the knot-holed walls and narrow limits, the rusty stove and fry-pan odors, the yarns and fun, the sense of security and possession of our houses in the orchard. There I experienced the mystery, grandeur, and vengeance of my first cigar. The five minutes of swagger and elation, the ten minutes of heroic indifference to smarting eyes and choking windpipe, the succeeding ten of contest between the pride urging me to stick to the weed, and the discomfort and increasing misery warning me to give it up. Then, ah then! the hours of defeat, prostration, clammy perspiration, and deadly nausea! What a tax Nature exacts in advance for the vicious habit that is to be a constant, if invisible, draft on her strength!

Permitting us to have those houses was a mistaken kindness in our Principal, for their influence was bad. As you have just seen, cigars were introduced where loafing was common. Instead of seizing opportunities for active out-door sports, we got in the habit of idling; and then, almost as a matter of course, there came fault-finding with our teachers, criticisms on studies and discipline, and schemes for insubordination. Where tobacco comes in use among a community of boys, you may be sure there is a patch of untilled soil somewhere in an expanse which should everywhere be cultivated. As I have called a cigar "weed," so it is often properly named, and our common friend of many words and much bulk — Noah Webster, LL. D. — says that "whatever plants grow among corn, grass, or in hedges, and which are either of no use to man or injurious to crops, are denominated *weeds*." Idling — mind, I do not say resting, for they are two very distinct things — is against the requirements of Nature, and contrary to the laws of God. The waters of the ocean are always in motion, and their atmosphere is full of health, but where there is stagnation there is disease and death. In Paris, you know, whenever three or more persons are seen by the *gens d'armes* to be standing for a minute, they are ordered to move on. The first Napoleon knew that a lot of idle heads seldom rubbed together without producing a spark of mischief. The sense of order, and convenience too, requires that the busy current of the streets shall not be impeded by the few who have only to gaze, chat, or loaf. So it was that when our school community had opportunity and temptation to idling, quarrelings, discontent, and vice sprang from them.

One of our first grumblings was about the monitor system, which had just been introduced into the school. There is something in that system, I know, which is repugnant to the ideas of boys, but the explanation for this is not in reality that it conflicts with some honorable principle or instinct, — as boys always honestly maintain it does, — but, as we shall find, can we but peep under that showy curtain, that it is such an effective check upon the many disorders and disobediences which the teachers' eyes cannot detect where so much is to be watched.

At the time when the orchard-club shanties became the afternoon resorts, our monitor system had been under way for a fortnight or three weeks, and probably, but for the idleness flourishing about the hot rusty stove in each one of those twelve cubic feet plank-castles, it would have continued without opposition, and the boys would gradually have grown accustomed to and contented with its workings, which were naturally a little rough at first.

One chilly, damp afternoon, when the wind, however, was fast drying up the wet places, and we might better have tried football with some mud than the unwholesome closeness of the shanties, Marley walked into a club circle, composed of Ben Barry, Drake Gracie, Brinsmade, Grant, and I, — not a bad set, though Ben Barry did us no more good or less harm, I imagine, than he did the school at large.

Marley came in, yawning and frowning.

"Halloa, Marley!" said Brick, putting down a much-worn copy of "Jack Sheppard," "why are you so late in making your appearance? Look as if you had just got out of an uncomfortable bed."

"Uncomfortable bed? Yes, if you call old Riley's recitation-room a bed, and three hundred lines of Greek, sleep."

"Miserable hole it is, and I should rather lose my spending-money for a whole term than copy Greek. I believe the language was only invented to worry people. Why in the mischief can't it have decent letters, at any rate, like our own?"

"That is the question, eh?" laughingly replied Grant. "Who can answer it in this crowd? Marley's conundrum, — Why can't the Greek have as decent letters as the English?"

And Ben Barry shouted out, "I know. Because *lettuce* was not cultivated when Greek was first written."

"Pshaw! Barry, go out in the air and refresh yourself."

"Not I," he answered, "for I want to know as well as any of you what ails Marley. Tell me, Marl, what was the row about? How came you to get three hundred lines?"

"Armstrong got them for me. Armstrong,—the dirty spy,—and I want to know if we must all come to watching one another?"

"Hard papers!" exclaimed Gracie; "but I guess it is all right, for I can't believe Mr. Norris would ask us to do what was in any way mean or dishonorable."

"O, don't you?" said Ben Barry, with one of his sneering laughs. "What an innocent you are. You don't think the excellent Mr. Norris will save himself the expense of extra teachers — don't you? Well, monitors are only ushers, but meaner, and do their work without pay."

"Do you mean to say, Ben Barry," replied Drake Gracie, without showing that he was at all ruffled by the sarcasm of his companion,—"do you mean to say, then, that the monitor system is a dishonorable one, and that Mr. Norris makes use of it to save himself the expense of a full number of teachers?"

"Well, Lawyer Gracie, you see I am not in the witness-box, but to answer your question by asking you one,—Is it not mean to set one fellow to watch another? And let me ask a second question,—Are we sent here by our parents to act as assistants to our Principal? In my humble opinion, the boy who willingly consents to report the faults of his comrades is a dirty chap; and I think, too, we are sent here to be taught and disciplined, not to be teachers or police ourselves."

"Halloa, Ben," interrupted Brick, "you are putting it rather strong. I am opposed to this monitor business, but I'll bet a pile of sawdust that Mr. Norris never wished us to do anything mean if he knew it to be mean, and I do not think a fellow to be doing anything wrong so long as he is only obeying those whom he should obey. However, I'll say out and out that the system, in my eyes, is a nuisance, and I wish the whole school would join in a remonstrance against it."

"That is a good idea," said Grant.

"So it is," continued Ben Barry, who was never well pleased when he found, as he did constantly, that the school powers were respected, and their government defended or excused by those who, he seemed to consider, should be naturally opposed to it. In the last chapter I gave some of Ben Barry's low-principled, but artfully sustained theories in regard to the relations between teachers and scholars; how he believed, or pretended to believe, that boarding-school was a game in which the teacher's part was one at strife with the boys' part; that the teacher was to make money and harass the boy, and that the boy was to get all the fun he could out of the game, and do as little work as possible. And now in a smiling way he pretended to agree with us, but strove at the same time to taunt us for respectfully remonstrating when, if we had but proper spirit and smartness, we should actively rebel against the requirements of the monitor system. "So it is," he said, "a very good idea. Let us be good, humble boys, and explain to Mr. Norris in a polite and submissive manner that we think this plan of monitors rather a hard one, and beg him not to take offense at our respectful remonstrance, but to consider it in his usual generous manner, and if at all consistent with his just discipline, to please relieve us of it. Yes, let 's do it in this way. Gracie, Brinsmade, or Grant, could draw up such a paper in the way it should be done, and then let us all sign it without blot or scratch. Of course Mr. Norris will immediately consider our humble petition and grant it."

A boy can generally meet force better than ridicule; so now with Ben Barry's jolly way to back it, and the smooth, sharp missile thrown so craftily by a fellow of his years and physical weight in the school, the speech had an effect, though made quietly, and as if without any intention except to amuse us a little. We others disliked the monitor burden as much as Barry did; but he had made it appear worse than it was, and stripped the right way in which we would meet it of all dignity. However, we were sensible of an offensive tone in the words, and when he had done, Grant said, "There, that will do; why can't you say you agree, Barry, without all that palaver?"

A few moments of silence followed, which Marley ended by asking, "How had we better do, Grant?"

"Don't ask me. I am no leader in the matter. But suppose we talk it over with the other fellows.

Let 's go to Rough's house. I guess Rough is there." Nelly Wrang, a great admirer of Rough, who had more friends than any other boy in the school, had built Rough's orchard-house, for Rough had not the least mechanical faculty. It stood in the best corner of the orchard, the farthest from the school-house, and where there would be the most shade in summer. Rough was there, and Bill Hazelteen. Rough hailed us through the open door as he saw our approach.

" Where is that bunch of snipe flying? There is not room for a monkey here, so you must stay outside to come in now."

" O Paddy, Paddy," we answered him with a laugh, for he was constantly making bulls as bad as that.

We leaned against the trees, the house, and the window-way, and commenced our talk on the monitor subject, by Grant asking Rough his opinion of it.

" O, it is bad — the worst thing I have known at the old academy; but what 's the use of making a row?"

" I'll tell you what I think," said Rough, — who often talked loud rebellion merely for the fun and excitement, not from a discontented nor bad disposition, — " and that is just this: we ought to commence and pitch each monitor, who attempts to act, out of the window. I hope when any of you see me a monitor, you will chuck me as far as you can; let me land in the garden though, for there is a jolly fat piece ploughed up opposite our north window."

"I beg you not to talk so," put in Ben Barry, continuing in the old strain; "how can you speak of actually resisting any school order? We can't hear of such a course — we would act respectfully and affectionately. Now" —

But Grant stopped him. "Shut up, you humbug — will you?" We laughed, and when Hazelteen asked earnestly, — "What can we do about it?" Brinsmade explained our plan of a written remonstrance.

"Good!" exclaimed Rough; "let it be a Round Robin; but let's have the fun first of pitching one or two monitors into the garden."

"What do you mean by a Round Robin?" I asked of Rough.

"O, a Round Robin is any sort of a written petition to which the names of the subscribers are written in a ring or circle, so as not to show who signed it first. Suppose we all go to the school-room and write out our sentiments, and then take them to all the boys to sign."

Arrived in the school-room, pens, ink, and paper were procured, and Brick was chosen to write it, as he could disguise his handwriting very much by making it what is called back-handed. Rough sat on the top of a desk opposite Brick, and dictated, with our amendments, the following paper: —

"MR NORRIS, OUR RESPECTED PRINCIPAL:—

"We, the undersigned, members of your school, feeling severely the burden of the new monitor system, and being unable to reconcile its requirements with our ideas of manly and honorable dealing, or with your teachings and examples of what is generous and above-board, do herein most earnestly but respectfully petition you, our esteemed master, to relieve us from the harshness and unpleasantness of a check which has never before been necessary in the school, and which now causes constant distress and discontent.

"Signed calmly and peaceably by your

"FIFTY-SEVEN SCHOLARS."

Then followed an immense circle in which to put our names. Each of our little set wrote his autograph, and then we carried the paper to every one of our school-mates, and in half an hour more the remonstrance was completed and laid on Mr. Norris's desk, for him to find at evening prayers.

That mistaken affair was the work of a Thursday afternoon. No notice was taken of the petition, either that evening, the next morning, or the evening following. Mr. Norris treated us as usual, and acted as if our document had never met his eye. When on Saturday, even the morning's usual address, announcing the rolls of merit and demerit, finishing with allusions of commendation or reproof for any marked events of the week, was concluded without the slightest notice of our grand remonstrance, we boys collected, by tacit agreement, in the gymnasium, and there excitedly discussed the matter. Some thought it a good joke, that we were beautifully sold. Some were silent and perplexed. And some were indignant and rebellious. There were a dozen of these last. Monitors were appointed for the week at Monday morning's roll-call; so until then we remained quiet and submitted to the surveillance of the old monitors.

Monday morning came, and when the then officer of the day, who by the monitor system was expected, besides conducting inspections and roll-calls, to note all misconduct that came under his sight in or out of school, and had to report such or be personally responsible — when that officer had called our names and noted absentees, he read from a paper furnished him by Mr. Norris, the new appointments: —

"Officer of the day and general school monitor, Richard Gracie."

"No you don't," was murmured from Drake's place in the line.

I should mention that neither the Principal nor any of the teachers was ever present at the morning roll-call, which was always conducted in the big second-story hall-way. Nevertheless, any noise or loud talking could be easily heard in Mr. Norris's bedroom, situated at one extremity of this hall.

A little laugh ran down the ranks at Drake's reply, and that was succeeded by a partly suppressed groan from several of the boys.

"Night monitor for Room No. 1, Brinsmade."

At that, a general groan, led by Brick, and louder than the first sign of insubordination, rose from us boys.

In that way were all the room monitors, and then the class monitors, announced, and the appointments received; each volley of groans surpassing the preceding in loudness and emphasis, until our Principal appeared in the hall, and asked the meaning of such an unusual noise. No reply being made, he merely said, "Let me hear no more of it," and disappeared. The groans ceased. Roll-call being finished, we went to the wash-room, where we were allowed fifteen minutes in which to make our toilets; but not a fellow touched basin, water, or towel; no, the excitement would not permit such commonplace duty as making ourselves clean. Grant was always a leader in school matters. Hitherto he had generally exerted his power on the side of order and authority; but seducing circumstances, and Ben Barry's cunning, had made him now a zealous anti-monitor. What increased this rebellious feeling was, no doubt, our Principal's apparent contempt of what Grant believed to be a very proper and humble remonstrance. So soon as all were in the wash-room, Grant shut the doors and called out, "Let 's see the monitors! Come, step out all who got appointments this morning."

In a moment there were fifteen monitors standing together — the officer of the day, seven room-monitors and seven class monitors. "Now," said Grant, "as we all signed the petition, I take it for granted that both monitors and non-monitors are united in hatred of the system, and in desire to abolish it."

"Yes," was the unanimous answer.

"Then what you have to do is to hand in *blanks* when your reports are called for. What do you say?"

"Yes, yes, yes," the monitors responded, and Rough's big bass voice added, "The fellow who backs out and makes a report shall suddenly visit the earth from a third-story window."

Laughing and chattering, we turned to our basins and tooth-brushes.

Before dispersing from the study-hall at night, Mr. Norris came in, as was his custom, and called for the head monitor's report. Gracie stepped forward and handed him a paper. Mr. Norris looked at it, and then said, "No report: an unusually orderly day. Thank you, young gentlemen." That did not sound pleasantly to our ears. Somehow, Mr. Norris's want of suspicion of our true position, or his calm determination in regard to it — we could not tell which it was — began to make us doubt the justice of our cause and our ability to carry it on victoriously.

That night there was much talking and disorder in the bedrooms. Our drill-master, the Captain, and Mr. Riley (commonly called "Old Riley,"), were up and down the halls ordering silence first in this room, then in that; but as fast as the tread of their feet died away down the halls, the noise recommenced.

When assembled after prayers next morning, Mr. Norris called for reports of the room monitors. As he opened each one and saw the blanks, his look grew very stern. Folding the papers carefully, he took them in his left hand, and then laying the other hand with a nervous clutch on the chair beside him, he gave a cough to clear his throat, — a sign which we fellows well knew to portend trouble to us, — like the two quick, distinct whistles of a locomotive when something is on the track ahead, as much as to say, "I warn you, boys, put on the brakes; quick, or take care!" — and then he merely said, very slowly and coolly: "The room monitors make no reports, but there was much noise in each room last night. It has been reported by the teachers. As I do not believe one of these monitors would tell a falsehood, I must conclude that the omissions to report are deliberate refusals to do their duty. However, they shall not be punished this time for such serious breach of discipline, except on the monitor plan: that where is disorder unreported, the monitor who should make the report must suffer for those who cause the disturbance requiring report, so that by forcing the monitor's silence, or acquiescing in his neglect to obey orders, those over whom he is placed selfishly put the entire punishment on him. Brinsmade, monitor of Room No. 1," — our Principal proceeded to call the names of all the bedroom monitors,—"you are all forbidden to enter the play-ground or gymnasium, to go out of school bounds, or to play any game for ten days. You are to forfeit spending-money for two Saturdays, and you are each to copy five hundred lines of 'Telemachus' in French." Then Mr. Norris paused for a second—coughed again—put both hands on the chair, and his eyes seeming to look right into each of us with a glance that it was hard to meet or defy, he proceeded as slowly but with more warmth than before,—"I purposely neglected to notice your remonstrance, because I wished this to be the last, as it is the first in this school, of such papers. Come to me, your friend, as well as master, if you feel yourselves treated unfairly by any rule of mine. But a Round Robin always looks to me cowardly and seditious. If there is nothing disrespectful or improper in what you have to express, why should any one of you be afraid to put his name first to such paper? Now I have desired to investigate where might be the hidden cause for opposition to the system I intend you to submit to, and who were the instigators of your discontent and resistance. No matter whether I have discovered these or not. You know I am always master here, and that what I order *must* be obeyed. I dislike to threaten, but you might as well know on the spot that the monitor system shall continue, and that one and all of you shall obey its requirements. You have, I believe, the incorrect idea that it requires something derogatory to your honor. Have I ever asked anything of such character of you?"

He paused, and for reply there came a hearty and genial "No."

"Well, as a gentleman, I assure you that I ask it not now. A band of criminals must not permit an informer — their aim is wrong. But a company of honest men or boys, whose aim is right, join in the best means of securing it. Here, for instance, in a school, teachers and pupils are supposed to be united in seeking improvement, moral, mental, and physical. Therefore, whatever works against that must be resisted, and I would not have that resistance come merely from your teachers, but from yourselves; I would have you share in the fight for right — have, masters and boys, a common interest in advancing ourselves. The monitor system does this: it makes each one in return responsible for his fellows, and each learns to obey and — that harder lesson — to command. There is nothing underhand about it. The monitor is known. And when you try being responsible for others, you learn to feel with your teachers proper, and to understand the difficulties of those who govern. If you are joined in a common cause — ah! only succeed in feeling this and making it a principle, and you give school-life its real dignity and its success — if you are working in a common cause, why not share its burdens and its honors as well as its tasks and its pleasures?

Give up the idea that there is anything small or dishonorable in the monitor system itself. It can be abused, like all good things. But in reality it is the proving and practice of honor. It is only new in this school. The system is old and proved. It is in reality the axis of army discipline ; and if you look to West Point as the school of honor and of the etiquette of honor, the monitor system sustains all government and movement there.

" My dear boys, let this unfortunate affair pass and be forgotten. I forgive it. Those I have named to punishment I gladly pardon. Come, my friends, make my system a strength in our school. Take hold with me. Help me in my labors for you."

There was not an expression of dissent on any face in that room. Even Barry and the blackest sheep were conquered for the time by our Principal's words, and by his manner, so firm, yet so friendly. So passed away, with April sports and April showers, the April Rebellion.

CHAPTER VI.

MONSIEUR ALPHONSE. — PICNIC AND A SINGED FRENCHMAN. — MEETING A CONVICT IN MID-RIVER.

It was the recess of an hour at noonday, and Monsieur Alphonse stood in the large study-hall talking with a group of boys. Monsieur Alphonse was our French teacher. His hair and whiskers were coarse, curly, and grizzly; his eyes small, round, and black; and his nose like the handle of a rust-eaten door-knocker. His eyebrows were heavy, and much more gray than his hair. Not a pleasant countenance, you think perhaps; and yet it was not unpleasant. There was some kindness and tenderness and much vivacity in it, though the short, bristly hairs, growing without any regard to right or propriety, on the nose, on the cheeks, on the forehead, hardly permitted one to discover the good traits marked on the face. I suppose the old Frenchman was about fifty-five, and for every year he had been in this country to teach boys the French language, he had only learned to speak bad and worse English, and to be more and more of a kind-hearted, irritable, pedantic old Frenchman. His clothes were tight and black, his pantaloons pulled close down with straps to his sharp-pointed thin boots, and a prodigious roll of black silk wrapped his neck and collar about in dusty folds. He was always as well sprinkled with snuff as a hash with pepper, and a slight odor of garlic diffused itself from his presence.

We boys rather liked "Old Alph," as we disrespectfully called Monsieur Alphonse among ourselves; though he never excited our respect, he made himself obeyed by the ingenuity of the punishments he devised. We delighted to tease him, with carefulness though as to how far it was practicable in safety, just as if he were a bear or monkey whose length of chain was to be remembered.

The sharpest stone we could throw at him was a contemptuous word of Bonaparte. I cannot remember now without a laugh how that imp of mischief, Traddles (our Traddles, not Dickens's), in translating a French oration one day in class, read out slowly and soberly, without suspicion of a smile, "Le grande Bonaparte — the big bony party." Monsieur Alphonse, in appreciation of the lines of inflated homage to his idol, was treating his great nose to immense pinches of snuff. As Traddles gave utterance to his insulting joke, and the class broke out in laughter, the astonished Frenchman exclaimed, "Vat you say? vat? — encore if you please, sar!" — and Traddles read again slowly, as if he were in some doubt, but still without any sign of fun in his face, — "Le grande Bonaparte — the big — yes, great — large — big

— the big bony party." Before the last syllable had left his mouth, our French teacher, in a paroxysm of rage, hurled the open snuff-box at the offender's head; and then, fairly dancing with fury, he hauled Traddles by the hair to the door, and, as he opened it to push him through, tremblingly cried out, "Go — miserable — go to Monsieur Norris and tell to him zat you have in-sulted me, and zat I do not teach you more — navare! Ah ciel! souffris tu que ces ingrats, que ces polissons se jouent impunément de ma puissance? I go from zis place of vilain boys." How much wilder his anger and emotion might have grown I know not, but at that point in his invective we boys, because of the snuff powder from his original projectile, commenced a mad chorus of irresistible sneezing. At that addition to Monsieur Alphonse's distress, the enraged Frenchman thrust his hands into his hair and rushed from the room, hurling back an indistinguishable torrent of *r r rs* rolled out to infinity, and *ss* spit out like the *ptshs* of a cat.

To go back, however, to the commencement of our chapter. Monsieur Alphonse was standing in the large study-hall talking with several boys. Monsieur had his favorites, and often it happened that those were they who gave him the most trouble. Our lame schoolmate — he whom we called "Rough," the wittiest, strongest (in his arms), noisiest, most obstinate boy among us, he who was acknowledged king of the school — was the first in Monsieur Alphonse's favor, and Brinsmade, our "Brick," stood second. They were both in the group. Grant, Charley Balch, Pudding Head, and I were there too. Rough sat on a desk, his broad, heavy shoulders against the wall, and his crippled legs hanging over a bench-back, his face a type of laughing defiance. Monsieur Alphonse, leaning against a desk, and with an arm over Brick's shoulders, was in a genial mood, laughing, talking excitedly, and making use of much bad English and good French. Grant lying full-length, stomach down, on a bench, supported his chin on his hands, and was enjoying quietly, in his own calm way, the conversation, made up, on Monsieur Alphonse's side, of reminiscences of his younger days in Paris, and on our side, of questions and quizzes. An inquiry came from Charley Balch: "Monsieur, were you ever in the Hôtel des Invalides?" and before Monsieur could reply, Rough shouted out an answer: "Of course he was there for years after the campaign in Egypt, and had to wear a wooden head — not so soft as yours, though" — turning to the amiable fellow who always bore unresistingly the title of "Pudding Head" — "in place of the one that was shot away. It was three years before Monsieur's present caput sprouted." Monsieur Alphonse joined in our laugh, and said "Ah, Ro-of, you are so funny and so rude as a gamin of Paris — Enfant terrible! Yes, Balch, I did go zare once, and I navare did wish to go again, for I did behold a sad spectácle; many poor soldiers, some wizout ar-r-m, some wizout lage, and some wizout nosing at all." "Those were fellows who had had their tongues shot away," again interrupted Rough, setting us laughing, while Monsieur Alphonse continued, in a perplexed way, "Vat you mean? zare tongs? no — zare two ar-r-rms, zare two lages — all; but soon I did come to an old brave, old corporal, one decoré by ze Empereur on ze field of bataille. After many years in ze hospital, he was dying, and he did call, 'I shall not die until I see ze Empereur — no, no;' and *alors*, zen, he fight to go from his bed, and zen ze old soldier weep," — Monsieur was following the old pensioner's example, — "and he did say again and again, 'I must see ze Empereur;' but ze nurse, she told him zat ze Empereur was in Saint Héléna. Ah! zen his sorrow was terrible; but I tell to the nurse in a wes — wes — how you say? *Ah cette langue misérable* — I tell to ze nurse in a leetle voize, — 'Bête! carry him wiz me to ze grande picture;' and we carry him, and at ze moment he see ze tableau magnifique, he say, 'Grâce à Dieu,' and wiz ze tronc of ar-r-m he make ze salut miliatary, and say in a voice profound, 'Corporal Rédaud — présent!' and he was dead." Our French teacher took snuff, snapped to the box, wiped his cheeks with a large, raggy silk handkerchief, and heaved a great sigh. The boys had no joke ready to cap that story with. But in a few moments the exaggeration of grief passed from

Monsieur Alphonse's face, and gave place to a bright, warm smile, as he turned his head to Brick, and said, "Mais, my amiable Br-r-rinsmade, please to tell me why we talk in zis room when it is so beautiful as ze summare out of ze doors?"

"I don't know, Monsieur; it is a splendid day sure enough. It is almost getting time for our Saturday picnics. June will be here in a few days."

"Peek-a-neek! you say peek-a-neek; bon, to-morrow will be Saturday, and if Monsieur Norris will wish, I shall go wiz all ze boys on a peek-a-neek, and I shall cook ze omélet and ze café. Éh — what you say, boys?"

We said "Yes — splendid," and as the one o'clock bell sounded for recitations, our little crowd hurrahed for Monsieur Alphonse.

Saturday was the perfection of what the last half of May can sometimes give us, — a day clear and soft, beautiful with young flowers, leaves, and delicate grass. Before the half-after five bell called us, there was music enough from hundreds of little feathered instruments to reconcile even sleepy-headed boys to awakening.

We came into the study-hall after breakfast to the morning inspection. After this, the weekly rolls of merit and demerit were read by our Principal, and hung up — one in gilt frame, the other in black — on the most conspicuous pillar in the room. Then Mr. Norris made some remarks on the progress of different classes, encouraged whatever he had noticed of good purpose among the boys, rebuked any evidence he might have discovered during the week of mistaken thought or dishonorable conduct, and in a cheerful manner told us that he had decided, at the solicitation of Monsieur Alphonse, to allow us to go on a picnic under the control of our French master; that we might have the entire day until the hour of evening prayers; but he enjoined on us respect and strict obedience to Monsieur Alphonse, who had so kindly obtained for us this pleasure. The usual weekly allowance of spending-money was handed to each boy, and with light hearts we rushed out-of-doors, and, getting Monsieur Alphonse in the centre of our throng, gave three terrific cheers, and a "tiger" that was certainly of Bengal extraction.

"Vat Zouaves terrible!" exclaimed Monsieur Alphonse, covering his ears to shut out the shouts. "Ah, you have done now? bien, vare de we go to-day?" Most of us called "Paradise Island," a beautiful spot in the Croton River, four miles from our school. A few said "Sleepy Hollow," and one or two wished our destination to be Frog Pond, the favorite waters for winter skating. But the majority carried the decision for Paradise Island, and we were off, as merrily mad as ever boys were, first for the village and Mother Cracken's store, to lay in such a motley collection of indigestibles as would have shocked our mammas, and brought a death verdict from any of the many jurors on dyspepsia, — dough-nuts, cocoa-nuts, peanuts; cheese, ham, herrings; squash-pies, mince-pies, cakes; lollipops, oranges, and root beer. Beside which we had the baskets of substantials prepared in the school larder under Monsieur Alphonse's eye, — the requisites for the omelet and coffee he had promised, and — shall I tell it? — a bottle of Orgeat for Monsieur himself and a few prime favorites. Ah! kind, weak, old, exiled Frenchman, — doomed to exchange the glories and sweets of the beautiful Paris for a cold life in the Yankee boarding-school cage of sixty mad boys, — that occasional smacked-over indulgence and amiable treachery to our school laws was a sin, dear Monsieur, which brought fortunately no harm, and which no doubt warmed thy shriveling heart as the sunny side of thy beloved Boulevards might.

Fully armed and equipped as pleasure requires, we struck off for the post-road to the Croton bridge, Monsieur Alphonse not so brisk, but as merry as the best of us. Our march was at times a game of "leap-frog," and then "follow your leader." Sometimes a frightened dog changed our progress to a chase, and again arm in arm we sauntered on the pleasant road, listening to our teacher's talk, or watching the river view, — Tappan Zee below, Haverstraw Bay and Croton Point above. The fresh, fragrant air, lovely scenery, the singing birds and our responding hearts, the Saturday without a task, and health, youth, and pleasure to make us as happy as boys can be — what could be jollier?

At length we reached the Croton, and rushed down the bank with a shout, to borrow a scow from fisherman Nicholas to boat us across the stream to Paradise Island. Nicholas was glad enough to see us, and, as it was not one of his fishing days, bade us take his best boat. Seven at a load, we were all ferried over in twenty minutes.

But I have not told how Rough got over the four-mile walk; well, he travelled royally on most willing horses from back to back, until every one of the big boys had carried him in turn. Those Saturday excursions would not have been complete without Rough. Ah, reader, I see you are thinking a joke — "*Rough* riding that;" yes, it was and it was not, for ridden enjoyed it as much as rider. Paradise Island was about two acres in extent, and thickly covered in most parts with old trees. Plenty of shade, and moss, and gnarled limbs to furnish delightful rural rooms full of unsashed windows, through which to see up and down the Croton, and on the opposite banks the most picturesque views. There were steep banks, making miniature coves and harbors in which to throw a fish-line hopefully; and for bathing, there were high rocks to dive from, or little patches of pebbly beach to wade in. In fact there never was a prettier or better place for picnics, yet no one seemed to go there but we boys.

The first excitement on the island that Saturday was the discovery of three flying-squirrels, that, startled by our gymnastics on a grape-vine swing, flew over our heads to a hole in a big, partly decayed oak, which bent over the water. The hole was nearly twenty feet from the ground, but the trunk was just of the size so difficult to climb. Several of us tried, but in vain, though once I reached to within two feet of the squirrels' retreat. We were shouting and urging one another on, scolding the awkward, encouraging the active, until Grant, who had heard the shouts from the other end of the island, came running up, and when he knew what we were after, quickly flung off his coat and attempted the difficult climb. After three minutes' hard work he reached the hole, and, peering into it, exclaimed, "I believe I see them — three — an old mother and two young chaps, I guess. I'll have them out." With which words he thrust in his arm, and called, "I have got one any how;" but as quickly as he said this, he gave a cry and pulled out his arm so suddenly that he lost his hold of the tree, and down he came with a tremendous souse into the water. He got on land in a few seconds, feeling more like drying his clothes by the fire than again attempting the capture of the squirrels, one of which had bitten his thumb to the bone. So Rough, who had been sitting near all the time, laughing loudly at all the scrapes we others got into, now offered to bet that he would capture the entire squirrel family if we would give him a boost and do, too, just what he ordered. We promised to, and, having lifted him to where he got a fair hold of the trunk, he pulled himself higher and higher by his muscular arms, until he reached the squirrels' hole. Settling himself firmly there, he reconnoitered the enemy's position, and then sang out to us, "I want a bag a foot or eighteen inches long, and with a mouth that will just fit over this hole." Grant offered his wet jacket. Rough guessed he could make that do, so we tossed it to him. Then he called for cord and tied up the sleeves, neck, and waist, so as to leave only the front open. This he clapped to the hole and sang out, "Now, fellows, you see that crack in the trunk down there? That leads into this big opening. So do you put a little fire there, and see if I won't bag the squirrels." We quickly did as he told us, and in two minutes more, Rough sang out, "All right! I have them. Now I'll tie the mouth and throw our trap and prey down, but be quick and get them into something stronger, for they will soon bite daylight through that jacket."

He threw the bundle to us, and we rolled some more garments about it, while Rough slid down the tree, and Marley started in the boat to borrow some sort of a trap from Nicholas.

At about one o'clock, we fellows reminded Monsieur Alphonse that our appetites were getting very sharp, notwithstanding continued pea-nuts, herrings, cheese, etc.; so our French teacher, much delighted at the information, set about the preliminaries, — which were to roll up his sleeves, wash his hands, and array himself in a long white napkin hung below his chin, and pinned behind by Rough, who made quizzical faces over our French cook's shoulder. And really the figure our worthy Frenchman presented, thus adorned, and running about in excited earnestness, mixing the coffee, breaking eggs, arranging the fire, was most ludicrous. He kept on talking, too, all the time, — his broken English mixed here and there with French, and now and then adorned by some favorite Latin quotation sharply and slowly accentuated, and addressed to the comprehension (generally without success) of us boys, — now smiling and laying a first finger beside his nose, as he stopped after some promising and successful stage in his cooking, and gazed at us triumphantly; then stamping his feet, shrugging his shoulders, and wrinkling his face in grimaces of despair, as he discovered a bad egg, burned his fingers, or let the coffee boil over. How we boys enjoyed it, while we increased the good play before us by slyly putting little annoyances in the Frenchman's way, — misplacing his implements, laying stones for him to trip over, and indulging cunningly in all such practical jokes as might bewilder "Monsieur" and thereby add to our fun. Unfortunately for him the work grew so engrossing that several times he came near setting himself on fire, for every time he leaned over the fire, the apron fastened at his neck would swing into the ashes. We warned him several times, and he would answer, "Tank you, mes amis, tank you, but I have no dangare at all." So Marley said in a low voice to us, "Don't say anything the next time, but let 's see the fun." Monsieur Alphonse was again busy with many deeds and more words. Taking the coffee-pot off, he snuffed in the aroma. "Good — délici-o-us! Ah! in a few moments we shall eat." Waving a gesture of admiration, coffee-pot in one hand and spoon in the other, he went on, raising his eyes to the sky first, — "Vat splendid day," and — dropping them to the browning omelet, — "Vat magnifique banquet! 'Dum vivimus vivamus,' you say so, n'est ce pas? — and I shall have a leetle glass of Orgeat" — (that was an aside to himself). Then smacking his lips over the thought, he sang: —

"Le vin charme tous les esprits:
Qu'on le donne
Par tonne.
Que le vin pleuve dans Paris,
Pour voir les gens les plus aigris
Gris."

He leaned over the fire to turn the omelet for the last time; a little tongue of fire licked at the napkin-apron. It liked the taste, and lapped here and there. We winked at one another, stifled our laughter, and watched. Monsieur Alphonse turned the omelet, and, as he regained position from bending over, he sang again with much zest: —

> "Le vin charme tous les esprits:
> Qu'on le donne
> Par" — !!!

"O horreur! ze flammes devore me! que puis je faire! Help, young gentlemens; I burn!" but before we could pull the blazing garment from his neck, he uttered a cry of fear, and, rushing down the river bank, popped head and body under the water. In a moment he emerged. Shall I ever forget the extraordinary appearance he then presented to our laughing eyes? It was extravagantly ludicrous, and so convulsed were we with the fun of the whole thing, that we could not have helped him if he had been in extreme danger; as it was, the water only reached to his waist, and there he stood, his arms held as high as possible above the water, one hand still clinging to a skillet, the other in a gesture of averting some danger, — his hair, singed whiskers, and body dripping with water, the burned apron still hanging in black rags to his neck, and his face shivering and terrified. When we first saw the apron catch fire, our only mischievous intention (instigated by Marley) was to give our kind and droll teacher a little fright. We did not think the greasy cloth would break so suddenly into a dangerous flame, nor that Monsieur would be exposed to any harm. He, poor Frenchman, never suspected that we had seen the flames and neglected to warn him. The catastrophe postponed our dinner, for Monsieur had to take off his wet clothes and be dressed by our contributions, — a shirt from one, uniform jacket from another, pantaloons from fisherman Nicholas across the river; and when he was fully attired and presiding beamingly at our luxurious rural dinner, he presented an appearance almost as comical as when he stood fresh from his sudden bath. However, we had a jolly good time over our meal, and then set to work — as boys can after the amplest feast — at climbing, jumping, wrestling, and all sorts of games. In a couple of hours more, Monsieur Alphonse called us to collect the various utensils of our banquet, and make preparations for the return home. At this time, old Nicholas crossed to the island, took a bite of what remained, and filled his pipe to smoke out a little chat with us. Monsieur Alphonse and he could never understand one another — they had often tried in the days gone by — so now it seemed to be agreed between them that when they met, Nicholas should perform a bow comically like Monsieur Alphonse's, and say in a very unnatural tone, and as if he were addressing a deaf man, and in broken English too, — "Gude day, Mushshere — very fine day — nice — fine. How do you do, sar?" and Monsieur Alphonse, trying on his side to imitate Nicholas's natural manner, and speak too very slow and plain English, would answer, assuming an off-hand way, "Ah, Capitain

Nicholas — tank you. I hope to see you well, and zat madame your wife and the leetle ones are in vary good health." So would end their exchange of courtesies, and then hearty, honest Nicholas would devote himself to us, and we to him.

So it was this time, and Nicholas and we were soon having a noisy chat together. As he was going, Grant said, — he, Rough, and I were by the tree to which his boat was made fast, "I should like to have a long row in that nice boat you have lent us to-day." "Well, so you can, my fine fellow, whenever you give the word," answered Nicholas, good-naturedly, "and why not take it and row home to the village this afternoon? I have to walk down to church with my old woman to-morrow, and I can come back in the boat, and get a peep at my nets at the same time." "Wouldn't we like it, though!" said Grant and I, "but Monsieur Alphonse would not give permission." "O nonsense! returned Nicholas. "I should like to have the boat got down there, so just you tell old Parley Voo that I should be much convenienced if he'd let you row my boat down — then you'll have him, for he is too perlite to refuse me under the sarcumstances." So we ran and made the request of Monsieur — that he would permit Grant and me to take the boat down, and Rough with us; and when we added that Nicholas said it would oblige him, he answered, "Ah zen, yes, for Monsieur Nicholas had ze goodness to lend to us his boat zis day." So instead of walking home by the road with the other boys, we were to have the great pleasure of the row, a mile down the Croton to the Hudson, and out on the big river to the village. We first put all the party across the stream, and then, very cheerful, — Rough sitting in the stern to steer, — we pulled away on our voyage.

The tide was running out with a strong sweep, so we just let our oars keep time and brush the water, while the pretty panorama slid by, — rugged masses of rock, a piece of white beach with descending road, hemlock woods, a little cottage under the bank and nets drying, a brook jumping through the darkness of a ravine to join company with the river, a rough wharf and shed, a smooth slope, cleared woods and glimpse of some wealthy man's well-ordered country-seat, — so the views changed as we glided on, and the afternoon sun descended to the river narrowing behind us.

Rough thought that as our paddles were moving so slowly, we ought to let some steam escape, and he sang, as he could sing, in a strong, cheery voice. I tell you it was a fine time we were having. We dallied so on the Croton that we did not come out on the Hudson until the sun was within half an hour of its exit, and then, fearful of being late to prayers, — at which time we had been instructed to be home, — we set to work at our oars. Going down the river with the sweep of the tide toward the out-going current in the centre, and with, too, a fresh easterly breeze, which urged our boat away from the shore we wished to land on, Rough had to steer more and more in. The afternoon boats on their way to Albany and other up-river towns, passed steaming by, giving us now and then the swell of their big wheels. Nicholas had wished us to leave his boat just below the prison; so when we got opposite the white buildings with their narrow, grated windows, Rough pointed the boat straight for shore, but because of the reasons I have mentioned, we were at least half a mile from land. In we pulled with a will.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Rough, "see that cask ahead — let 's pick it up," and he steered for it. In a few minutes we reached it and were about to haul it in the boat, when, to our utmost astonishment, it turned over, showing the head and shoulders of a swimming man — an escaping prisoner as we knew in a moment by the checked clothes and closely shaved head. He grasped the boat's side and climbed in before we had time to think what we should do, saying in a rough and tired, but threatening voice, "My young coves, if you care a penny for your lives you'll turn your boat for the other side and pull as you never pulled before." He had crouched down in the boat and drawn a big clasp-knife from his pocket. That he opened as he spoke, continuing with a savage oath, "Quick now — quick! or I'll let your wind out in half a second." There was noth-

"He grasped the boat's side and climbed in before we had time to think what we should do." Page 110.

ing else for us but to do as we were bidden. It was such an emergency as we had never imagined. In fifteen minutes we were in mid-river. In the half hour more, before we toiling boys reached the Rockland shore, — our prison-bird constantly urging us on and ominously feeling the edge of his knife, — Rough recovered his usual *sang froid*, and commenced questioning our prize-master, (what an ugly, frightened, crafty face he had!) who grimly answered some of the questions, telling us that he slipped into the water from the yard where the coopers worked — his trade was cooperage — just at the bustling moment when the bell rang and the prisoners mustered to march to their cells, and that with a cask over his head he had swum for mid-river with all his might. Suddenly there came the report of an alarm musket from the prison, now shut from our sight by the shades of approaching night.

In a moment more our bow touched the Rockland shore, just below Rockland itself, and where an apparently unscalable wall of stone a hundred feet high shuts out the back country from the river. The prisoner jumped out, but, holding fast to the boat's bow, ordered us to give him coat, cap, pantaloons, and shoes. Rough and I contributed cap and coat (this he turned inside out, turned down the collar, and cut off the buttons), and Grant being the largest of us, had to furnish pantaloons and shoes. Having donned those garments hastily and thrown us the prison clothes with an oath and a laugh, he said, "Good-by, coves. I guess you won't get back very quickly to give the alarm, so"— Here Rough, after feeling in his pockets, produced a quarter of a dollar and threw it to the prisoner, saying, "I know it is wrong, but I can't help boosting a fellow out of trouble, and perhaps you ought not to be in jail anyhow." The man caught it, laughed, thanked Rough, and wishing he might never get in limbo, quickly disappeared in the darkness. We had to recross the river, tired as we were, and did not reach the school-house until nine o'clock. Of course the accident excused our lateness and the alarm caused. We, sharers of the boat adventure, were heroes among our companions for a week. The prisoner, a notorious burglar, whose alias was "Bowery Gem," was never recaptured. So ended our eventful Saturday.

CHAPTER VII.

A JUNE VACATION. — THE SCHOOL LIBRARY. — A STORY THERE. — ADVENTURE IN THE OLD MILL.

It happened to "Vieux Moustache" years ago, when his upper-lip used to tan, unshaded from the sun, and when perhaps his entire being colored with bright rays much readier than now, that his mother wrote him a letter which, arriving one mid-day of early summer, overclouded the bright sky, and brought some hot rain to his eyes. It told the school-boy that his parents had suddenly decided, owing to that dear mother's ill-health and the doctor's advice, to start for Europe, and that they must leave their son to pass the vacation, so soon to begin, at the boarding-school. I have reason to believe that the released memories of the past sketch for him now, in the book they bear, the picture of a shaggy-headed, inky-fingered, moist-eyed boy, sitting in a despairing attitude up in the window-seat of a retired recitation-room. The shadows of a far-gone afternoon are thickening on the bare, lonely place, and hanging heavily on the side we see of that figure with its knees drawn up. A drop of water — how well the artist has shown that — glistens on the hand cutting with a knife at the sash-frame. The soft, bright light without, just withdrawing itself from the dusty room, gives the figure a dreary distinctness; and I think the little bird sitting on that branch near the window makes the picture still more sad, for he who looks at the sketch cannot help imagining that the bird is singing a thankful song, while the poor boy is heart-sore and despairing. Ah! those griefs of youth are very bitter, though so quickly over.

But the leaves of retrospection are turned, and, after that one melancholy scene, there come a series of the jolliest, pleasantest sketches imaginable; for that June vacation, even at boarding-school, was one of the most delightful months the young fellow ever spent.

My brother went away with my parents to Europe, but there remained with me at the boarding-school, through vacation, Grant and Charley Balch. We had our beds in one room together, and the only rules restricting us at all were that we should always be present at morning and evening prayers, and that we should be in the house by nine o'clock every night, which latter regulation was not obeyed on one occasion that you shall hear of in this June vacation chapter.

The school library — our head-master's private room; a long, comfortable, shadowy room, lined on three sides with book-shelves stretching from floor to ceiling, and lighted by one tall, narrow window, through which the sunbeams stretched themselves contentedly every clear day — was a place that in term-time we only peeked into, standing, card in hand, at the door, waiting for what books we wanted of those allowed to go from the shelves, — history, travels, or biography. But now, in vacation time, and when Mr. Norris took vacation as well as his scholars, we were permitted to be in the library whenever we wished, and to read whatever books suited us, and, too, without the restricting presence of our much-feared, though much-loved Principal. So, on every rainy day of that June, we three companions in exile used to stretch ourselves on the floor or benches of that snug, quiet, and reverenced little kingdom of wisdom and romance, and crop, with hungry minds, the clover-fields unguarded by fence or wall.

There were three days in the first week of our vacation when it rained continually, freshening delightfully, no doubt, the clods and buds, but making the now quiet school-house very dull and gloomy. I do not know what amount of mischief or low spirits those gray, dripping days might have bred, had we not resorted on the first morning of our imprisonment to the companionship of those entertaining old fellows, who in long, dust-covered files leaned one against another on the library shelves. Grant seized one of them, — a certain Robert Kerr, abounding in voyages and travels, — and stretched himself full-length on the only sofa the room possessed; Charley Balch, having mounted the library step-ladder, remained perched there enraptured by some romance he had ferreted out from the top shelf; while I, seated on the floor, turned over the illustrated leaves of a ponderous history of European wars.

But Charley had found such a treasure in his book that he informed us constantly of his good fortune in exclamations, — "I tell you this is exciting, though!" "Real blood and thunder, I guess!" "We ought all to read this together!" Finally Grant and I gave up our books, and told Balch that if he had such a first-rate story he had better read it out aloud. So, sitting up on his perch, he commenced, neither he nor we knowing there were three volumes of it. Nevertheless, so interesting did they prove that for the remainder of that day, and all the next day, and through most of the next, did we fellows listen to the story. I have never seen the book in any other library, and now I have forgotten its title and its author, but it was written in the quaint, veracious style of old-fashioned novels, and its strange plot captivated us boys.

It was the story of a traveller — an English nobleman — who, happening to come out from a Turkish coffee-house on the throng of a Constantinople street, suddenly called his companion's attention to a good-looking, well-dressed stranger sauntering along on the opposite side, and the Englishman said to his friend, "How strange that

that man's hands are covered with blood, and yet he walks along so perfectly unconcerned!" "Blood?" answered his friend; "I see no blood. What do you mean? "You see no blood on that man's hands? — why, they are covered with blood." This remarkable difference of opinion when the object of their scrutiny was but thirty or forty yards off, induced the friends to immediately cross the street and follow the stranger, that one might convince the other of his mistake by closer inspection. They followed him, but, strange to say each saw as before. The result is that the English nobleman believes that in some mysterious way these blood-marks proclaim to him at least, that the man bearing them has committed some horrible crime, and he thenceforward devotes himself for years and years, and all over the globe, to following, with the genius of a detective, the suspected, and, as it afterward proves, guilty man. Through many exciting adventures they pass, the Englishman in varied disguises making the acquaintance now and again of the red-handed German. As the Englishman constantly discovers, no one else notices the blood-stains: they are visible to his eyes alone.

Concerning his past life the German discloses but little, except that he has lived in London when young. The Englishman writes home, and finds that the victim of search has given a correct name; that he did live in London for many years; that he was the adopted child of a very rich old lady, who, having no children or near relatives, had made this Fausten Carner her heir; and he learns that the old lady *died suddenly — was found dead in her bed.*

Now I tell this story only to show, as you boys will understand, how such an exciting tale, strangely conceived and minutely narrated in a manner to make it appear true, and powerfully written, too, — how such a narrative held us spell-bound, and gave the old library-room, with its subdued light and rain-pattered window, a weird but fascinating attraction to us three exiles; and how the rainy days there made a portion of that June vacation a strange contrast to our sunny out-door days, and yet gave it an enchantment which we relished. That story of the bloody hands and many other exciting romances, and the essences floating there from the spirits hidden in the old volumes, made the library to us boys a sort of conjuror's cave. However, I must finish the story I wish to give you the plot of. But to make it brief: the Englishman continues his apparently foolish trail for ten years, with only here and there a conjectured clew to any guiltiness on the part of his prey. After six or seven years, however, Fausten Carner believes some one is following him, and at length suspects the Englishman when he detects the same person under two disguises, and now he studies to escape his pursuer. Once he succeeds in losing him for a year. Once he plans and almost succeeds in making way with his suspector.

But at last the disclosure comes, when the Englishman, long baffled, finds him dying in a hotel at Vienna, alone, in frightful misery of body and mind. Fausten Carner, though hating and fearing the Englishman, yet feels himself forced, as he dies, to relieve his conscience of its horrible secret. The amount of his confession is, that craving the good old woman's large fortune, he could not wait for her natural death, but, with the most terrible cunning, planned and effected her murder in a manner which left not the slightest suspicion of foul play. Entering his benefactress' room at night, after having administered to her a slight narcotic in her evening cup of tea, he with a lancet made a minute puncture in one of her feet which hung over the bedside, opening an artery through which life was quickly and painlessly exhausted. He caught the blood in a vessel, removed it, cleansed the wound, and left no mark that was discovered of his crime. It was supposed without question that the old woman had passed away naturally in her sleep. Was ever a more deliberate, heartless, and cold-blooded crime committed? Moving along with that thrilling plot were a company of characters and incidents in most pleasing contrast to it and the wretch Fausten Carner, and the black and frightful current of the story wound through scenes and interests the very reverse. If ever the boyish love for the exciting and horrible was skillfully gratified, it was with that story in which we lived for three rainy days, and the impression of which I doubt if one of us has ever forgotten.

The sunshine danced into the library window, sending the shadowy, spirit-inmates back to doze in their earthly bindings, and stretched through every window it could reach in the school-house, making us boys wake up far away from the dark, engrossing scenes of yesterday — to a June morning, fresh and healthy with the happiest sounds and sights.

"No more in-doors for me," said Grant, as he jumped from his bed and threw up the window. "What a day, I declare! hundreds of birds trying to choke themselves with the jolliest hymns; leaves and sunshine dancing merrily with one another; and we chaps rubbing our eyes on the sleeves of our night-shirts. Come, wake up, — hurry down. Let 's have some fun to-day. What do you say to a regular tramp, due east by my pocket-compass, turning out of line for nothing but houses — through woods, through streams, over walls, fences — everything?"

"Good lick, count me in," sang out Charley from the folds of the shirt sliding over his head.

"Number two for me," signified my assent, as I tried to jerk the left boot on my right foot.

Grant pitched a pillow at us, and ran singing down-stairs. Charley Balch was beating me in the clothes race. "Hi, hi! hurry along, old slow coach. Don't you see yet that we are in for a good time now it is vacation. *Dies faustus* — as

Cicero ejaculated on recovering from the measles," and he bounded out of the room.

Having stowed away a grand old breakfast in fifteen minutes, during which we chatted, laughed, and planned with every mouthful, Grant talked Mrs. Hote, the housekeeper, into putting up dinners for us, and we were off on the tramp.

"Now, remember," said Grant, as we came through the play-yard gate on the road, "no turning to the right side or to the left, except for a building, and when we reach what we can neither get through nor over, then our tramp is finished. Let's steer due east." With which he pulled out the pocket-compass, and we put our heads together to consult it.

"Well, the furthest point we can see to steer for exactly east of this," said Charley Balch, after a few minutes, "is that bare tree on the hill back of General Warn's house."

"Yes, I think so too; let that be our bearing, and when it is reached, we can take another point in the same way, and so keep on."

The first stretch was easy enough, only walls and fences to climb. The second was between one and two miles in length to a hay-rick, — part of the way through a very thorny swamp and a cedar thicket. For the third point, we took a far distant something, whether a tree or mass of rock we could not make out then. It proved the frame corner of an old tumble-down house, to reach which we had to make the half-circuits of two farm dwellings, and to wade through a horse-pond. It was near eleven o'clock, and we came out on a road which seemed to run east as far as we could see, without a building near it. An old but sleek-looking horse was feeding here on the young grass bordering the fences. It struck me that this was a good chance to change horses, — shank's-mares for the venerable gray. The idea was suggested to my companions, who gave it a hearty reception, and Charley Balch, assuming an idle, innocent, aimless manner, easily succeeded in reaching the mane of the unsophisticated country steed without exciting his suspicions. He led him coaxingly to us, and when I had extemporized a rope bit and bridle, we all three mounted, Charley in front of me as captain and helmsman, and Grant behind. A walk suited us at first until old gray might get reconciled to the burden and we settle down in our seats. Ten minutes of that, and by the persuasion of my heels and Grant's stick, we urged our charger to a trot, — the most dislocating edition of that gait ever published on a highway. So greatly jarred and disordered were we, that our united efforts failed for some time to restore the horse to his first and more agreeable pace. We had done so, caught our breaths, and got our breeches' legs down to our boots again, when we were suddenly and fiercely hailed by a sturdy farmer, who stood unseen by us before, about ten paces ahead, but, fortunately for us, on the field side of a pair of bars, "Halloo! you scamps, what are ye doing? three lummoxes, by my soul, on my honest gray!" and he accompanied his angry address by climbing the bars with an ugly hickory sapling in his hand.

"Quick! put on your steam," shouted Grant to Charley, and in a second we were all three pounding on gray's ribs, and the old horse had struck a gallop.

"Galloping," we cried back to our questioner: "and what are you doing?"

It was one of those hasty wrongs — unjust and unkind — that boys are sometimes guilty of. The act was as quick as the impulse, and, before we could repent, we were off as fast as the farmer's gray ever legged it, I fancy. And there the indignant owner stood in our cloud of dust, — the picture of discomfited amazement and indignation.

We kept up the gallop for a mile or more, and then discovered that the old horse seemed trying to avenge his master. He was running away, a proceeding that the rope bridle could not control in the slightest degree. Rushing along we came to a boggy brook, spanned by a rough bridge without rails. The old horse leaped it with a grunt, and put a finish to us and his charge by sending his hind heels flourishing in the air. With arms locked about each others' waists, we turned a somerset and landed in the brook. No one was hurt, and we were far out of reach or sight of the farmer; nevertheless we did not wait to wring our wet clothes or wipe off the mud, but started across the fields as fast as we could run, and having reached a little belt of woods, we halted there to consider our position. Grant's way of performing that operation was to lean against a tree and laugh until the crows overhead cawed an echo, and several curious chipmunks came from their holes to see what was going on so funny in their domain.

"Hi," said Grant, recovering his breath, "if that was not the hardest ride I ever took! Why, I hardly had time to think of the mad old farmer before I was head-first in that brook. My small, truthful, friend compass had a ducking. If he was not drowned, let 's ask him where due east is now," and he pulled the compass from his pocket.

Charley Balch, who was rubbing his muddy cap on the grass, said he guessed we had lost the bee-line. Nevertheless we took another point to steer by and continued the tramp, forgetful that it was now afternoon, and that our luncheon was gone. In half an hour more of climbing fences, jumping brooks, pushing up hills and trotting down them, we came to a sunny little house that looked as if just about to slide into the rattling stream on whose sloping bank it stood. We knocked at the door and asked for a drink of milk. A pretty little girl answered our rap and brought us a panful. When we had emptied it, I asked if there were not trout in the stream.

"Yeth, zir, — plenty tout in Pekkle Ide."

"Speckle Side, you call it — eh ?" She nodded with her head on one side. "Well, that is a pretty name for a trout stream; but how, little sweetheart," asked Grant in his laughing way — "how can we catch them? Haven't you a hook and line in the house to lend us?"

"Yeth, zir — guess zo," and she ran in to bring just what we wanted.

Having fished for a long distance down the stream and caught nine nice trout, we came to a lazy, mouldy old mill that looked — with its dripping, many-fingered wheel idle in the stream — like a great sleeping wood-giant with one hand hanging in the water. At least, Charley Balch said it did. I did not see it so. It only looked to me like a pretty old, awkward mill that was not working. But when we had sat for a while on the bank near the wheel, cooking and eating our trout, I began to see what a drowsy, picturesque spot we were in. The heavy, brown beams and timbers of the mill, with its irregular form; its small windows and dark shadows; the big drooping trees leaning over it; the background of thick woods; the slime-coated wheel dripping, dripping sadly, while the water ran beneath it with a splashing and gurgling and rippling of cheerfulness that seemed to make fun of its melancholy partner.

"I am going to take a nap here before we turn home," said Charley Balch, throwing himself back on the bank, when we had finished our trout.

"I agree to that, for this mill strikes me as being the drowsiest place to sleep in I ever saw. I don't wonder the mill is still, and I'll bet the miller is sound asleep somewhere near. Let's go in and see. I reckon it won't make much matter if we miss being home at prayers just once and in vacation. We can get a nap and easily reach the school by bed-time. Come."

As Grant voted in that way with Charley, I said nothing against the plan. We went all over the mill, but not another soul was there; so in a big room overhead, where the wheel-bands ran in and out, and where bags of unground corn were piled, we stretched ourselves to sleep. When I awoke, it was with a confused, indistinct idea of where I was. Everything was in perfect darkness about me, and the only light that caught my eye came through the knot-holes and seams of the floor we were lying on. I felt the grasp of Grant's fingers on my arm and heard him whisper, "Hist!" in my ear. At the same time I heard a mumbling of conversation in the room beneath. Charley Balch was awake and listening too. We put our eyes to the large openings in the floor and discovered three men in the sort of office-room below of the mill. A lantern stood on the floor. One of the men was trying to light a fire in a small stove. The others sat on benches between our eyes and the lantern, so their figures and gestures were magnified and intensified to our sight. Only now and then, as they partly turned and raised their heads in conversation, could we see their countenances at all. One was a particularly rough and savage-looking man. The other, from the few short glimpses I had of his face, was as forbidding as his companion. The man busy with the stove — pushing in sticks and pieces of paper, lighting matches, and swearing when they went out and his kindlings refused to burn — was the safest-looking individual of the three, and from a long smock-frock or blouse he wore, I took him to be the miller and proprietor of our sleeping-place. The voices of the three were coarse and deep, and at first all we could hear of their ejaculatory talk was a grumbling rumble, that sounded something like the smothered growling of dogs. He whom I thought to be the miller spoke louder and clearer than his companions, and the first words I could understand were, when he, having succeeded in his endeavors to kindle a fire, said, —

"I never come to the old mill for half an hour of night, winter or summer, without a fire in this stove. There 's always such a cold, slimy, bat-y feeling after sundown here. An' it seems damper — more unwholesome like — in warm weather than in cold. Don't like to hear that water at night; cheery enough here of days, but I'd rather be at home when night comes. However, Hangran, as you said, it 's a good chance for you to get those bags. Dergar, if you've got a plug of 'baccer I'll fill my pipe."

The one he addressed as Dergar, the worst-looking man of the three, handed him the plug. Nothing was said while the miller cut up a pipeful — handed back the quid — shut his immense jack-knife with a snap, — lighted the pipe, and got it going by loud, smacking whiffs. Then he spoke again, having taken a seat, horseback manner, on the further end of Dergar's bench, addressing his neighbor in an uncertain way and in a lower voice, — looking across to the man he had before called Hangran, as if he would include him in the question: "Hem, Dergar, any — any new" — here he looked expressively from one to the other of his companions, and drew his right hand slowly across his throat, at the same time uttering a guttural note — we could see plainly the gesture, as he was turned with the lantern-light in his face — "anything new in that way just now?"

"Yes," answered Dergar, raising his head quickly and speaking angrily — "yes — to-morrow — down at the 'Cademy."

"Halloo! how 's that? Is it worth it?"

"I tell you it is, rather," again replied Dergar, but sinking his voice, after he had looked, as it seemed to me, into the darkness behind him, and then we could only catch the words — "throats — three of them;" and then, speaking louder, "Have you got a whetstone about here?"

While the miller went into the corner to get the whetstone, the villainous-looking Dergar pulled from the knife-case, hanging behind from his waist-

"Well, Dergar, what are you going to slaughter?" Page 129.

belt, a long, pointed knife, and felt its edge preparatory to sharpening it.

But as soon as Dergar had said, "Down at the 'Cademy," the biggest of the three, Hangran, had started up from his sleepy attitude, and, when Dergar had asked for the whetstone, exclaimed in a voice much clearer than we had heard before, and so that we caught every word of it, —

"I'll go with you then, Dergar, for I have a score to take out of three young ones there. My fingers itch to get hold of them."

Awaking in a strange place, and in the darkness of night, to see and hear those three dangerous-looking men in the room below us, apparently met for some secret, was reason enough for Grant's warning to us that we should keep still, but when we did make out indistinctly that their plot was probably a robbery at the school-house, and apparently our murder, we were thoroughly frightened, and awaited with trembling to hear what should follow. There was a silence for a few moments — a silence in which we could hear only our own heart-beats, and the rubbing of Dergar's knife on the stone. Then the miller, rapping out the tobacco from his pipe on the stove, said with a yawn, "Well, Dergar, what are you going to slaughter — *pigs or beef?*"

Could you have heard Grant's scream of laughter, as you can imagine our immense relief, you would have started as we did, and as did, too, the astonished company below us. As we gathered ourselves up from the rows of grain-bags to go down-stairs, the three supposed burglars and cut-throats, somewhat recovered from the alarm we caused them, commenced to ascend the stairs. As we faced each other, the second one on the way up shouted out, "Ah, you young villains, I 've got you then, after all." It was the man called Hangran, and now seen to be the angry farmer of our morning's adventure. The miller, however, kept him from chastising us, and when the three had heard us tell of our fright up-stairs, they burst into a long and hearty laugh. That helped, with our sincere apology, to mollify farmer Hangran, who had intended to ride down to our school with the butcher, Dergar, and take vengeance for our bad treatment of him and his horse.

After fifteen minutes of laughter and explanations in the room of the bloody conference, the butcher got up from where he had reseated himself close to the stove, and said, "Well, young gentlemen, we frightened you and you did the same to us, for when I hee-ard that larff overhead, I'll be hanged if I didn't think some stray lunatic or water-ghost was up among the meal-bags. But now that Farmer Hangran has got his empty bags, and has let you off from a licking, we must be moving. My horse is impatient, I guess, and I have eight miles to ride, for I must sleep at the village inn to-night, so as to be on hand for *that murder* early in the morning! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't we ride with you, Mr. Dergar, as farmer Hangran has given up his idea of going down to the Academy to settle his score with the three young ones?" Charley Balch looked over at the now complacent farmer, and laughed as he made his petition of the butcher.

It was freely granted, and as the young moon rose, we were rattling along in the butcher's wagon. At about ten o'clock, we quietly entered the school-house by the wash-house door, and immediately sought for Mr. Norris, to explain our absence from prayers and late arrival. But he was passing the night in New York; so our absence was unnoticed. That June vacation tramp was about the most exciting day's adventure of a very happy month.

CHAPTER VIII.

BREAKING IN FOR A SUMMER TERM. — A SON OF THE SEA AND A NEW TEACHER JOIN THE SCHOOL.

WHAT harder piece of road is tnere for the boarding-school boy to travel than the first month of a new term? And when those weeks of returned study and discipline happen in July — hot, lazy July — how severely the harness galls! There are those long, dry, breezeless hours of midsummer in the study-hall, — that great bare room, with its two or three score of warm, restless, speechless, yawning, shock-headed boys, elbowing the desks and scratching their heads, while the inevitable tasks lie dog-eared before them. From without there come puffing through the open window now and then, tempting scents from cherry-trees and garden-flowers, and with them the hum of bees, the cackling of fowls, and the call of cheerful voices. But within, the least weary sound is the tick tock, tick tock, of the dusty, persistent clock — "tick tock, work Jock, tick tock, learn of me, industry, busily, tick tock, good Jock," and beside that are only the turning of leaves, the scraping of pencils, and the burr of a blue-bottle, knocking his head perseveringly against walls and windows. The immense blackboard holds before every eye wandering from its duty the motto, "*Labor omnia vincit.*" And alongside, seated on a platform, is the monitor or teacher, ready to detect a whisper or movement, and transfer the crime to his report for Saturday's settlement.

O how hard, after the freedom and idleness of vacation, to be chained, as it were, to such dry, fatiguing toil; to feel the weariness of travelling over and over, up and down, the heavy dictionary to discover — what we don't want to know — what Caius Marius said, or what Sallust supposed him to have said, to the Romans about their objections to making him General; to pile away on a shelf of Memory, very hard to reach, an unsuggestive rule of Greek grammar, while from another shelf of the same store-house there comes tumbling down that ride on the unbroken black colt, or the day with Uncle Jerry after woodcock, when we missed the whirring long-bills, and he knocked them over; to strive to get into our understanding, and remember too, why, in a right-angled triangle the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the two other sides, while Marley, unsuspected by our study guardian, is cunningly working his cord telegraph to Hazelteen's desk; to endeavor, in any one of these or other of the school tasks, to busy our minds where our hearts are not; to set to work at picking the prickly fruits of knowledge, when we have been for weeks rolling in the grass, wandering with the brooks, hunting through the woods, and in every way living without rule or restraint and enjoying every piece of fun we knew of.

Talk of Russian steppes or African deserts; why, I have often thought in those Julys of school return, that an Arab horse and long gun, with the sandiest, hottest, thirstiest day, and most illimitable spread of glare and merciless refraction, would be a jolly spree compared to the miserable work hours of midsummer days in the boarding-school study-hall.

The quick boys, and the lazy boys, and those who never did their work thoroughly, would generally withdraw all attention from the books before them after two or three hours, and turn to some novel or other story that was cautiously drawn from the desk and placed partly beneath a Geography or a History, or whatever it might be they had been studying, so that the teacher or monitor in charge might not detect the change; or if such recreation was not to their taste, they would cunningly devise all sorts of mischief to amuse themselves or tease the teacher, without exposing themselves to report. Dropping desk-covers, as if by accident, coughing or sneezing in apparently irresistible paroxysms, drawing caricatures of the teacher in charge or of each other, and passing them from desk to desk, throwing paper balls at studious companions, and trying in every way to be troublesome, and yet baffle the vigilance of him who watched.

It was a hard task to keep guard over that herd of restless, contriving boys — comical as monkeys, and uneasy as cubs beset by bees. The study time was from nine till one, during which, classes were now and then called off to various recitations, thus cutting out a slice of the four hours for each and every boy, but allowing no rest to the police-like preceptor, who sat in continual vigilance.

When the monitor system became firmly established in our school, the teachers were gradually released from this, to them, most unpleasant duty; but before that time, they, each in turn, and arranging so as not to interfere with their proper classes, assumed the cares of morning study. The evening hour and a half study was easy to manage, for the time was not so long as to fatigue the boys, who had then played out their excessive physical energy, and were able better to apply themselves to study and quiet.

The irascible, undignified, and nervous Monsieur Alphonse was always excused by our Principal from the duties of presiding over study hours. Nothing would the boys have enjoyed more than to have had him in that position, but I verily believe the trial to Monsieur Alphonse would have resulted in hydrophobia or St. Vitus' dance.

With the commencement of one summer term, we were introduced to a new teacher in Latin. In class, he was excellent. His own interest and directness of application never permitted our attention to turn from the lessons, and he made these short and engaging by means of side anecdotes and explanations, so that the lessons, which we became so much interested in as always to study them fairly, were in recitation much like conversations on some object of common pleasure. Mr. Cozzens ranked and reported us according to proficiency, yet he was never called upon to govern us or require order in class; but when he came to sit over the study-hall, where discipline must be maintained and order enforced by severity, tact, and nerve, he was powerless, and the most severely tried of any teacher we had ever had. This was, as you will see, because he was a man of the gentlest feelings and most unsuspicious nature, and because he was totally inexperienced in the ways of boys, and unable by nerve or knowledge to oppose or fathom their mischievousness.

Mr. Cozzens was a delicate man, of about the medium size, with a pale, refined face, always wearing a smiling expression of kindness, tenderness, and absent-mindedness. His hair was light, thick, and curly. He wore spectacles, which in any perplexity he pushed closer to his eyes, a finger on each glass. His walk was uncertain, as if he were studying something so closely as to make him blind to where his feet were travelling. As I have said, a better teacher of books could hardly be found, nor a man more ignorant of the world — particularly the boy world. When the boys, having discovered his inefficiency in government, first began to take advantage of it and worry him, he was utterly disconcerted and perplexed. However, I am anticipating my story of something happening after a few weeks of Mr. Cozzens's experience in the study hall, which changed our treatment of him.

We have never yet met in these boarding-school annals a boy who was an actor in them for only two terms, but who played a conspicuous part. He came then, as he comes now, when I had passed over more than half my experience of its course. He appeared on the play-ground one afternoon as if he had been our school-mate for years — perfectly at his ease, with no timidity nor bashfulness. "Choose me in, will you?" he said, walking up to Grant and Pudding Head, who were making up sides for a game of Base. Grant stopped in his turn to name a man, and, looking at the unabashed comer, asked slowly and contemptuously, "And who may you be, *Cooley?*" That term "Cooley" stuck to him ever afterward. "I? O, I'm a chap who has knocked around the world a bit and seen more than any of you, I guess; and I like Base, and would be glad if you'd choose me in, for I feel dull and like a stranger in this place — never was in a boarding-school before." "Indeed," answered Grant, "you had better have kept out of it now. I don't want chaps I've never seen play, on my side. Ask that fellow," pointing to Pudding Head.

"Independent frigate you are! 'Show your flag or don't sail in my company — eh?' Perhaps you're right; anyhow I am not the loser. I'll go in this main-top and see how you *boys* play," saying "boys" as if he were a man, and he turned on his heel and swung himself up into an apple-tree by a branch that hung, jumping-distance, above his head.

Certainly that was the most remarkable new boy we had ever seen on our premises. His consummate "brass" so astonished us that no one answered him a word, and our game commenced, but every time an eye could leave the game, it looked up to where "Cooley" was perched. Some of our loafing school-mates, — I mean those fellows who rarely join in any game or anything else requiring exertion, but who hang about wherever something is going on, as if they wished they were not too lazy to take a hand, — some of those fellows, we soon saw, had climbed up near *Cooley*, and he seemed to be talking to them in an assured, condescending way that had already drawn their interest and respect; and he a new boy — a *greeny!*

Well, he was a tightly built chap, anyhow; rather short, but he looked active and graceful, and his shoulders were shaped as broad and fair as our best gymnasts'. What firm, regular features, — rather jolly, too; and those full, quick, dark eyes, and waving black hair. He looked like the sailor boys, with tightly hipped pants, loose jackets, and flying neck-handkerchiefs we see in pictures, and he had talked some sea-slang — had he not?

Our game finished, we naturally gathered about Cooley's "main-top" tree, and Grant sang out to him, "Come down here, Cooley." "Ay-ay," was the cheerful response; but then he stopped, and added in a different voice, "Request or command?"

"Whichever you choose to take it, but come down."

"Well, seeing as these are strange waters to me, I'll take it as both. And now what will you have, shipmates?" He finished the sentence as he swung from his branch and alighted among us like a cat.

"We want to know who you are," said Grant. "We would get some account of a fellow that walks in here with the brass of an eighteen-pounder, and talks to the cocks of this walk as shipmates, frigates, and gabbles about flags and main-tops and such like — who are you?"

Cooley laughed quietly, fanned himself with his wide-brim straw hat, and, leaning against a tree, answered our questioning through Grant in such a frank, full, and unoffended manner, that that, and his story, really put him, before he had done, in just the position which he seemed to have expected and assumed by right — that of an old boy. Just think of a fellow coming into a boarding-school slap-dash, without being new-boy or greeny, without hazing or trouble of any kind! Why, I never heard of such a thing before, any more than I have ever heard of any one coming into life a full-grown man, without cries, stomach-aches, measles, alphabet, rule of three, or any of the disagreeables of childhood. Nevertheless, Cooley — his name was Horace MacGray — established himself in our school exactly in such way.

He said he was between sixteen and seventeen years of age; that he had always hated study until now that it was so late, and he had discovered he could do nothing in the world without education; that, when eleven years old, he ran away from home and school in New York, and went as cabin-boy in a ship sailing for China; that afterward he joined the navy as powder-monkey, and that ever since then he had remained in the navy, visiting all the great ports of the world, sailing in many seas; that he had been in two sea-fights, and had once been shipwrecked. His wonderful adventures astonished us, and so excited our interest that we kept him at his yarns until prayer-bell rang. He finished his talk by telling us that now he had determined to get a good education before he knocked about any more. He had seen enough of cabin-boy, powder-monkey, and all those sorts of places that a fellow had to stay in unless he had the shrouds of learning to climb aloft by. "I have been a pretty hard boy — a regular vagabond sailor; but my father is a gentleman, and so am I — *inside*. Just let me get some good, solid learning first, and then, see if I don't walk up to a commodore's berth, or something just as good."

In the summer twilight before study hour, we were all in the orchard again, listening to Horace MacGray. He, too, had questions to ask of us about our masters and studies. He did not conceal that he thought us, as he expressed it, "a blessed set of greenies;" and he said that if we all, masters and boys, could take one good voyage in a wet-frigate with a tearing old captain, it would help us to a sort of knowledge we wanted, but could not get in such a granny place. In the course of our conversation, he inquired, putting a piece of tobacco in his mouth at the same time,—for our new school-mate had learned many low habits at sea,—"Do they flog here?" "Yes," answered Gracie; "and I reckon you will get some of it before long."

"Pooh! much I would care for such rattan licks. I carry my diploma in the licking line. Look some of you, who, I'll bet, howl under the switch, what the cat-o'-nine-tails does;" and with that he threw off his coat and pulled his shirt down from the shoulders, for us to see and feel the long brown welts that crossed his back.

"I got that for telling a little, conceited prig of a midshipman what I thought of him. 'Monkey,' says he, as he walked forward one day with some land-friend who had come off to see him, and before whom he wanted to appear mighty big (we were lying in the harbor of Southampton, and middy and his friend had a paper of nuts they were munching—I was covered with dirt and tar, and was caulking a deck-seam near the for'mast), 'monkey,' says he, grinning like a chissy-cat,—'monkey, do you want some feed?' and he chucked me a handful of peanuts. I up and told him in some of the choicest forecastle lingo, that it wouldn't do you innocents any good to hear, what he was. He reported my conduct to the captain, and next morning I was strapped to the gratings and got a dozen and a half. It nearly took the life out of me, but I was bound the dirty middy should not have the satisfaction of hearing a groan from my lips; and he did not, for before they fastened me I had put a chunk of lead in my mouth, but when they cut me down I had two pieces in my mouth, for I bit the chunk right through."

A plucky, generous, hard-working fellow was Horace MacGray, and during his year in our school, not a boy studied more faithfully than he or advanced faster in his studies. And book-work came very hard to him after so many wasted years, but that did not dishearten him. He had determined to learn, and learn he did. He would escape the evils he had lived in, and become, as he had said, a gentleman like his father. He saw what a reckless, foolish boy he had been, and he would start now and make himself a man; then join the navy again, if possible, and rise to command where he had once only obeyed. But rough, brave fellow, he had a hard time fighting down the low habits and principles that had got fast to him on a man-of-war. The only teacher he had any respect for was our Principal. The others he was always getting into difficulty with. He had been accustomed to see a uniform on those who commanded, and to hear oaths or short, severe words from them, and now he could not recognize authority in those who governed differently, and the teachers he disliked most and respected least were those who were the easiest and most familiar in their treatment of the boys. "Land lubbers!" he would say, "milksop men, to be content to rule it over half a hundred boys. Bah!"

To Mr. Cozzens he immediately took a dislike. He entirely misunderstood this good, gentle scholar, taking his soft, hesitating speech as a proof of hypocrisy; his bashfulness before a full study-hall and inability to control the rampant boys, as evidence of cowardice. From the first day of MacGray's school experience, until his opinions were thoroughly changed, he continued to treat Mr. Cozzens with an impatient contempt that he hardly attempted to disguise.

Many of the study hours of the July I write of fell to this new teacher. They were times of martyrdom to him and of most unlimited disorder to the boys. He never seemed able to single out the ringleaders, nor to catch any particular one in an actual misdemeanor. The study hall was one scene of uneasiness, trickery, and whispered riot. Mr. Cozzens would turn from this side to that, nervous and blushing, constantly pushing the spectacles closer to his eyes, and saying in a gentle, beseeching voice, "Young gentleman, do have less noise if you please;" "I shall be obliged to report some of you;" "Master ——, did you throw that ball?" "Who made that noise like a cat?" "Really, this will not do, young gentleman."

Every day the disturbance increased. Our Principal, receiving the names of but a few offenders, probably thought that things were moving very smoothly under the new teacher. At length the boys got to openly mimicking Mr. Cozzens, and when he spoke, a voice, now here, and now there, would mock his words and manner, and Mr. Cozzens, finally, mortified and harassed beyond endurance, reported the state of things to Mr. Norris. Then our Principal, I suppose, placed himself where he could oversee the study-hall without being seen himself, for suddenly, one hot morning, when the boys were in the height of insubordination, and some fellow had just shouted out, in answer to Mr. Cozzens's piteous call for order, — it was Cooley's contemptuous tone, — "*Order!* you mean Bread and Milk!" — suddenly, without a sound of warning, Mr. Norris stood within the room, by the hall door, facing all of us. Now the power Mr. Norris had over us was something wonderful; a small, fragile man, of but little physical strength, and apparently no bodily match for any medium-sized boy in the school; quiet, but quick in movement, and with a voice that no one ever heard raised above an ordinary pitch, he yet held the most desperate cases in subjection. All respected him almost to the degree of awe. The majority had a real affection for him. And those who disliked him because of his power, feared him for the same reason. There were certain well-attested stories among us of how several desperate characters of the past had attempted to resist by force the orders or punishment inflicted by our potent Principal, and how they had come to sudden, heavy, and unexpected grief.

When anything wrong in the school particularly roused Mr. Norris, his manner was quieter and his voice lower than usual. Only a greater paleness in his face and a sterner expression about the mouth, showed unusual emotion. Threats, exhortation, or addresses of any kind were very rare from Mr. Norris.

As we in dismay discovered our Principal standing and searching every one of our faces, we knew that the end of our riotous ways had come. After a moment, in which the study-room grew hushed as a church, Mr. Norris advanced to Mr. Cozzens, and said in a calm, pleasant voice, "If you are willing, Mr. Cozzens, I will take the rest of this study hour." Mr. Cozzens retired, and Mr. Norris stood in his place without a word for several minutes. Our eyes fell to our books, and the ticking of the clock sounded as loud as a bell. Then Mr. Norris spoke : —

"Boys, the gentleman whom I have just seen shamefully badgered and insulted by many of you, is — *a gentleman;* too kind, gentle, and delicate to deal with you, I see. His experience has been more with books than with men; and to the roughness of boys he is entirely unaccustomed. Yet he is to stay here, and his presence is to be always respected — *Do you understand?* Now to some of you — I hope they are many — I have to speak as to boys who are not only my pupils, but my friends. This gentleman — and you will find him to be truly that — I *ask* you to uphold. I ask you to frown down his insulters by your influence and good example. To see that he is respectfully treated and defended. I only ask that you will see that this stranger has ordinary courtesy and fair play. That 's all, and I shall attend to the rest."

This appeal of our Principal to the honor of the school had a great effect, and though many joined in the change of conduct merely because the popular feeling required it, and though Horace MacGray still proclaimed his contempt for Mr. Cozzens, and only treated him with the formality of respect, saying, that "the man who could not rule his crew himself should have mutiny," and that some lubbers might think salt junk fresh meat because the Captain called it so, but he was too old a sailor to be buttered in that way; nevertheless, for a week or more the study-hall remained quiet and orderly when Mr. Cozzens presided over it.

Now Hazelteen, whom we may remember as

one of the boys who stood out against all the aggressions and intimidations of Spicy Jake and his rowdy companions, was of that nature which seems constituted, by higher ordainment than human appointment, a police everywhere to shield the weak and defend the suffering or oppressed. He took up Mr. Cozzens's cause warmly; said, as Mr. Norris had, that it was a shame to insult Mr. Cozzens as we had done, and that no decent fellow should stand by and see a gentleman ill-treated just because he did not know how to keep us in fear of him. Of course Bill Hazleteen and Cooley took exactly opposite grounds, and sometimes there were pretty hot discussions that threatened blows between the two boys. Cooley called Hazelteen "a regular Don Quixote sap," and Hazelteen dubbed MacGray "Ruffian Jack." The desks of the study-hall stood in lines up and down the room, two together. Hazelteen and another boy occupied the seats just in advance of those allotted to MacGray and a companion, Hazelteen sitting not immediately in front of MacGray, but of MacGray's partner.

One morning, in the third week of July, and when there had been a little more uneasiness and disorder than was now usual in Mr. Cozzens's study hours, a hard little customer called Skelty — his name was Skelton — persevered in annoying Mr. Cozzens by such a stream of misdemeanors, that Mr. Cozzens, finding his marks and entreaties were of no avail, finally summoned the young rip from his seat, and ordered him to report himself to Mr. Norris. Just as he gave the command, — an unusual severity for Mr. Cozzens to resort to, — and the tone of his voice betrayed anger and nervousness, some bold rebel, probably with the idea that Mr. Cozzens had unfairly singled out a little fellow to reprove so severely, sang out in half a mutter, "Shame!" and at the same moment a big spit-ball hit Mr. Cozzens on the shoulder. Whether it was MacGray or some other who called "shame," I do not know, but Hazelteen saw MacGray throw the missile; and as Mr. Cozzens, every ray of color fading from his face, stood up, trembling with mortification and indignation, and attempted to say something, he (Hazenteen) turned right about at his desk and slapped MacGray's face with a whack that resounded sharply in the suddenly silent room. On the instant our teacher was forgotten, and every eye turned with excitement to the furious fight that followed Hazelteen's blow. The contest, however, was of short duration; for Mr. Cozzens's supineness vanished when he beheld the remarkable position of affairs, and, as quickly as he could cross the hall, he dragged MacGray back by the collar, whilst some big fellows seized Hazelteen. And now MacGray would have struck his teacher had not Grant caught his arm. To intensify the dramatic scene, our Principal appearing suddenly, as he always did in great crises like this, stepped into the monitor stand and commanded, as his ruler struck the desk, "*Order!*" The tableau vanished, and as the excited boys regained their seats, Mr. Cozzens walked up to Mr. Norris and explained in a low voice what he knew of the case. Then our Principal called out, "Hazelteen, stand up!" He did so, holding a handkerchief to a cut across his cheek. "Did you strike MacGray?" Hazelteen replied promptly, "I did." Before Mr. Norris could resume, MacGray sprang up, and in the most impetuous manner cried out, "But it was my fault, and if he didn 't make much out of striking me, I believe he was right, by thunder, — and that's the whole of it."

"Sit down *immediately* MacGray, and don't speak another word in this room until I speak to you. . . . Hazelteen, your conduct was disorderly, but I thank you for the prompt and fearless manner in which you have resented the outrage to this gentleman, Mr. Cozzens. I thank you. MacGray, I will see you in my library now."

We supposed that Cooley would be flogged or immediately dismissed from the school. But it was not so. Mr. Norris took a warm interest in this boy, who had been exposed for so many years to the worst influences, and yet, with all his faults, impetuous manner, and some low habits, was truthful, fearless, industrious, and forgiving. So he called him into his library and told him to prepare for a flogging. Then, when he saw MacGray was willing to submit to such infliction, he spared him the punishment, but took the opportunity which such a serious occasion had furnished, to advise and reprove him in a manner that Cooley never should forget. And when MacGray left that library, it was as a boy sincerely attached to his teacher, with new rules and intentions of conduct, and with the determination, which he immediately carried out, of apologizing to Mr. Cozzens. As you may imagine, from what we have seen of Mr. Cozzens's character, MacGray's unreserved apology was received with such full forgiveness and kind assurances that our sailor boy began to think himself mistaken in his opinion of the gentle teacher.

Within ten days, another event occurred to prove to MacGray that under the modest, delicate exterior and quiet, timid manners of his once-despised teacher was the "true grit" of self-sacrifice and prompt courage. It came about in this way. We were on our way, with two teachers, to bathe, one Saturday afternoon. Mr. Cozzens was one of these teachers. On the path to our bathing cove in the Hudson, we had to pass along the edge of a high cliff, that for forty yards of our way stood up over the deep river in a perpendicular wall of rock. At one point in our path, a cedar-tree sprung from some crevice on the inner side of the walk, stretched across our way, so that we had always to step over it, and then projected many feet over the river below. Just there, the height from the water to the cedar branch was from thirty to thirty-five feet, and the usual depth of water there, as we knew from many a swim, was about fifteen feet.

As we went along that afternoon, Cooley was displaying many of his sailor pranks, and when we drew near the spot just described, he ran forward and commenced climbing out, hand over hand, to the extremity of the branch, and there he hung, kicking his legs at us in comical derision. The teachers were a little behind us, but when they beheld the recklessness of MacGray's feat, Mr. Cozzens stood still in genuine alarm, but the other, our drill-master, rushed forward and ordered MacGray to come back immediately. Our comrade commenced to do so, but gave himself a swing first, which sent him swaying up and down. "Crack — cr-rip" — you know how a green branch will snap first, and then tear along its grain before giving way. So, to our terrible alarm, did the cedar, hanging for a second right down the front of the cliff and then parting, with MacGray yet clutching it. Whilst we saw our school-fellow strike the water in a heap, the branch above him, Mr. Cozzens, pale as death, ran up to us, kicking off his shoes and throwing by his coat and vest as he approached. He stood for a moment on the edge of the cliff, watching the surface beneath which MacGray had disappeared. There was the broken limb, floating down with the current, but the boy had not come up. The blow on the water and the stick falling on top of him had probably hurt him badly. Mr. Cozzens jumped off, feet downward, his body held easy and erect. As his feet struck the water, he extended, so he told us afterwards, his legs and arms, thus preventing himself from coming violently against the bottom. He went under — rose again — then dived, — was not seen for, perhaps, a quarter of a minute, — and reappeared with MacGray in his grasp, held out from him by a hold on the back of the disabled one's neck and hair. Our suspense was now relieved, for we knew Mr. Cozzens to be an excellent swimmer, and so, too, was MacGray at any other time.

They got to a landing-place, a beach some fifty yards further down the river, and when we reached them, MacGray had recovered consciousness. No serious harm resulted from the accident. MacGray had only been severely stunned by the concussion and slightly bruised by the branch falling with him. But, as you may believe, that same concussion, beside shaking Cooley's breath from him, knocked out too the last feeling of contempt for Mr. Cozzens.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — HAZELTEEN'S STORY OF "THE HAUNTED HOUSE."

It was an evening of midsummer, the close of a most bow-wow-y dog-day, a day that had tried teachers and pupils. After tea, and even when the sun had disappeared, it yet remained too hot for the usual games. The twilight rolled down without a puff of air to move its dusky folds. The boys, with shirt-collars unbuttoned and jackets laid beside them, sat on the back piazzas of the school-house, and on the orchard fence, fanning themselves with caps and hankerchiefs. They wiped their foreheads, hitched up their trousers now and then, phewed and whistled, but were too much used up by the heat for sport or much conversation. Even the birds seemed disturbed by the oppressive air. They could not get settled comfortably on the orchard limbs, but flitted about in the uncertain light from twig to twig, and uttered little unusual notes of discontent. The tree-toads piped for wind or rain, and the cows, left for the night on the pasture-lot, lowed murmuringly for unlimited water. Only the quick-glimmering fire-flies, and the fat toads loafing in hops from beneath steps and stones, seemed to enjoy the hot, hot August night. A servant went out to the well, and as the cool sound of the running chain and the splash of the bucket reached the boy's ears, there was a general move for water. That little suggestion of refreshment served to waken them from their warm drowsiness, and in a few moments there were a score huddled about the old-fashioned well-frame, first in a cheerful contest for cool drinks, and then pouring cups full on each other's heads. Satisfied in those ways, they set to work ducking one another with every dripping bucketful.

Rough called from his perch on the fence, "You will be nice-looking fellows for evening study, won't you? and the bell will ring soon."

"O confound that bell," said some one else. "I wish this hot night might melt its old clapper. Halloa! look!"

We turned in the direction indicated, and there saw the molten-colored moon rising above the hill beyond our orchard, and dispelling the evening obscurity with a flood of gold-dust light; it was as if the moon had been heated too.

"That's stunning, isn't it? Hot looking, though," said Grant.

"Yes," replied Rough, "it is like the light from a tremendous blacksmith forge."

"Don't you feel as if you were being quick-prestoed off by magic to some far-away scene?" slowly inquired Charley Balch, who was lying along the top of the fence, and had raised his head to face the moon.

"Yes," said Hazelteen. "I know just what you mean, for it almost seems to me as if I were in some Turkish city, or at any rate it makes me imagine how such a place looks in the moonlight. It seems as if I could see lounging figures in turbans, and with chibouks in their mouths. You and Rough sort of look so in the light through those branches; and I fancy I see mosques and minarets away off there, and silver crescents above them. I can almost smell coffee and tobacco."

"What a nose!" laughed out Rough, in his deep, strong voice, and with his comically practical manner he continued, "Blow it, and try if you can't smell a grain of opium."

"O stop your nonsense, Rough," said Ben Barry, in most sneering tones as the laughter at Rough's characteristic remark ceased; "how devoid of poetry you are. Why now I was pretty near Hazelteen then, and, under the enchantment, my eyes were just caught by the figure of a moonstruck houri, who had lost her balance, and was falling from the fourteenth story of an ivory harem, plump on the top of Bill's head."

Both Rough's and Barry's remark were greeted with laughter. Hazelteen, too, was amused by Rough's joke, but not so by Ben Barry's; for though the latter's words sounded apparently as harmless, yet there was something sneering and offensive in the tone with which they were uttered, and Barry *intended* to make Hazelteen appear ridiculous. He wished to snub him, and he took every occasion that offered to do so.

To do Barry justice, I don't believe he really disliked Hazelteen, but they moved on different levels, and Barry liked to throw stones at whatever flew above him.

As the fellows laughed at the way in which Hazelteen's little bit of romance was snubbed, Ben Barry and some others moved off, whilst Charley Balch remained with Hazelteen, and a few others, grouped about Rough still seated on the fence.

"Why," said Rough, — they sometimes called him "King Rough," — laughing again, "you are rather touchy, Will; you can't take a joke."

"Yes, I can, King Rough, take a joke; your's I don't mind, but there is always a snag in Barry's. If you said the very same words as he, they would sound jolly, but with Barry — well, never mind, only I *don't* like his fun."

"I know," replied Rough, speaking seriously now, "that there is a black streak in Barry with all his good companionship, and somehow I guess he isn't true blue, for Mr. Norris has never seemed to put any confidence in him; but then, Will, my young knight, you are too high-strung — just remember how you flew at "Cooley" when we badgered Mr. Cozzens that time in study; and I believe that sailor, MacGray, is going to turn out in time a splendid fellow. He has got fine old stuff in him, notwithstanding he has had more kicks than pats in his experiences."

"Yes, I like Horace first rate, but he is an out-an'-out-er, and shows his colors always."

"But," Rough interrupted, "wasn't he an independent, rebellious blackguard at first? but now he has begun to drop the forecastle, and though he is the gayest chap that I ever saw for a lark, yet even our very straight Principal seems to have a tender eye for MacGray. What a yarn he can spin! Eh? Look out, Charley Balch, for your laurels."

"Look out for my laurels? Why, they are gone already. My stories are from books and a dreamy head, whilst his are what he has seen or known," answered Charley.

"How about the club for story-telling, that was proposed some time ago?" now asked Brick Brinsmade, who had taken no part in the foregoing conversation.

"Good lick, Brick," answered Rough; "let 's organize and begin now. Let 's have six or eight members only, and call it the 'Once Upon a Time Club.'"

Rough, Grant, Hazelteen, Charley Balch, and I, composed the group, as Brick's proposition was made and assented to. Further discussion added Horace MacGray and another to the names of the club just born.

"Why should not the 'Once Upon a Time Club' have its first session to-night?" I asked.

"When?" several said.

"Why — commence now, and here" — Ding! dong! dong! dingle! dongle! dong! ding! Study hour was called by the bell, that clanged as if the thermometer were at zero instead of eighty; and as Rough scrambled on Grant's back, and we all started across the school yard for the study-hall, Brick Brinsmade suggested that we might have our first meeting on the roof, after bed hour. Such a clandestine proceeding was just to our taste. "Mum" was to be the word, and we were to meet on the house-top as soon after bed hour as practicable.

At the time the occurrences of this chapter took place, Rough, alone of those good fellows who once shared the northwest corner room with me, remained in the old quarters. The others had been scattered around in different rooms, and Rough and I were left the seniors of No. 4, which otherwise accommodated three very sleepy new boys. Soon after the lights were out in rooms and halls, the "innocents"— so we had dubbed our room-mates — gave reliable evidences of slumber, one by a soprano snore, another by deep quiet, and the third by mutterings of a dream, in which he twice repeated "Please, mother;" to which, when Rough replied maternally, "O no, my son, you must stay at school, and mind you remain a good boy, and always be in bed at nine o'clock," I knew it was safe for us to start for our club meeting; so, merely slipping on my pantaloons

"Nothing could be more delightful or more conducive to story-telling than our situation." Page 159.

and slippers, I moved quietly to Rough's bed and took him on my back. Stealing as noiselessly as possible through the hall, lighted by one long stream of moonlight, and as musical as a bullfrog-swamp with the varied snores from twelve rooms of sleepers, we reached the garret steps, my Rough rider keeping his seat stiffly, and encouraging his steed with whispered jokes. Up we climbed, lifted the door, shut it after us, felt our way tremblingly over the unplastered rafters, and reached the short ladder that led through the scuttle. Up that I could not go mounted, so Rough had to unclasp his arms from my neck and make his way, monkey fashion, up the rounds. We were the last of our club to arrive. There sat the others, squat on the tin, with their backs against the cupola. "Hi, hi, hi!" they all exclaimed in a subdued, miniature sort of a cheer, as we joined the group.

Nothing could be more delightful, or more conducive to story-telling than our situation, — we eight boy-friends, arrayed in half-costume, sitting in the moon-made shadow of the cupola at ten o'clock of that lovely summer night. Our school world, companions and masters, were sleeping beneath us. We could look down on orchard, garden, and play-ground, so quiet and softened now in the liquid light. The sounds we heard were the peeping, chirruping songs of the tree-toads, the duets of katydids, and the musical utterings of other nocturnal insects, that were all parts of a gently murmuring little chorus of midsummer's night. Sometimes this pleasant, undertoned music, which seemed a low, fairy orchestra to our recitative entertainment, was hushed for the moment by a voice sounding from the village, or harshly and ludicrously interrupted by the caterwauling of those sweet domestic animals that so love to tempt showers of bottles on every moonlit opportunity. It was fascinating to sit there at such an hour, and realize how utterly unguessed at by school-fellows or school-masters was our present position. There was a secrecy and romance about the whole thing that framed our proceedings in a mysterious charm. In fact, it was a situation just suited to delight a boy. Hazelteen had been selected by ballot for the first story, and as he for a few introductory moments thought over what it should be, we fellows said not a word, but let our eyes journey over the far-stretched view of hills and river, that faded in the distance to moonlight alone. "Well, I am ready," said Hazelteen in a low voice, which he was obliged to keep subdued to the same level all through his story, for fear of the sound reaching some restless teacher below, — "I am ready," and we huddled closer to him, as he commenced: "*Once — upon — a — time* — h-hem —

"My father has a small plantation on the St. John's River. It is not the place where we live; that is near ——. The St. John's plantation almost takes care of itself. There are only eleven hands on it, and a head negro "driver" we call such, who is responsible for the work. Father or our overseer goes up there every few days — it is just seventeen miles from home. None of us had ever slept there since father bought the place, because the house is a miserable, melancholy wreck of what had long, long ago been a very fine large residence, — Governor ——'s; and, though neither father or any of us boys cared for that of course, it was always said to be *haunted.* The house stands on a bluff of the St. John's River, and on the south slope of what is a hill in Florida — merely a little elevation of about twenty-five feet above the surrounding level. It stands near the bluff, which is a perpendicular white sand face. Between the river and the house there is a thick grove of splendid oaks, heavily hung with the graceful, melancholy, gray moss. You fellows who have never been South, can't imagine how grand and solemn those moss-covered oak woods are; but they are very sad — more suitable to be buried in than to live in, I have always thought. One broad opening to the river gives a view of an impenetrable, dark swamp on the opposite bank, and opens to those passing up or down the river a glance of a long, brown, piazzaed house, with wild, luxuriant vines growing up its sides, and pillars in tangled disorder, a window-sash entirely gone here, a shutter hanging there, the piazza unboarded in places, through which rank weeds and flowers stretch up, the gutter swaying down with weight of dampness, rottenness, and moss, all making up a desolate picture of a neglected, deserted, unfortunate house. On one side of this so-called haunted house, is a dense growth of uncultivated orange-trees, and on the other side what had once been an extensive flower-garden; but when I saw it you could not find a path or border — young trees and vines sprawled over and through a miniature forest of disordered flowers — luxuriant and gorgeous, though growing in such profuse confusion. Back of the house you could with difficulty discover the path through a thicket of all sorts of wild saplings, to the clear pine woods, on the other side of which is our neat little plantation settlement of six or eight cabins. The fields for cultivation were beyond those.

"Well, I used often to ride up to the St. John's plantation for a day's shooting. In the oaks all along the river bank, there are lots of cat squirrels and fox squirrels; in the bayoux that make up from the river into the swamp opposite, are ducks in December and January; many dozens of snipe have I shot in the plantation fields; and there are deer enough all through the back country. O, what grand times I have had on that old place! The only difficulty was that we never could stay there over night, for mother did not want us to sleep in the old mansion-house, because it was damp and open to cold, and perhaps, also, because she did not like us to be alone with none but negroes near us, and right on the river bluff. But how we longed to try a night in the *haunted* house, you can imagine. On those excursions we always had a meal of some kind at old Sanchra's cabin. Sanchra is (unless he has died since I heard from home) the oldest negro in that part of Florida, and a real African nigger, talking such wonderfully broken, black English, that it is terribly hard to understand him, and his naturally immense figure is so bent and distorted by age, that, as he moves about his cabin, he looks like one of Du Chaillu's gorillas just rising from all-fours. He lives alone, and does no work except shell corn and such light things as he chooses; but he used to get us up all sorts of strange and very nice dishes when we were there hunting. He, with all the other negroes, had a perfect horror of the big house. Even in the daytime they would not go in nor near it. The others were always ready enough to talk of 'de ghose 'ouse,' but never agreed in their stories, which were jumbles of real nigger nonsense. But Sanchra could not be induced to say anything about it; all that could be got out of him to our persevering questions, was the stereotyped 'Sanchra no talk o' dat — debbil knows 'nuff,' — until one memorable day, early in my last winter at home, when we, Hal Stuart, and my brother John, were chatting with Sanchra just in front of his cabin. Suddenly he pointed with his long lean arm toward the old mansion-house, two chimneys of which showed through and above the woods, and as suddenly again the old man turned himself about, with his back to the sight that had startled him. Making some strange gestures, he mumbled words which we could not understand, but supposed to be in his native language. We looked where he had pointed, and saw a great ugly gray bird rising, as it seemed, right out of a chimney-top. I do not know what the bird was, but it looked something like a gigantic bittern, with a long, protruding neck, sharp, crooked wings moved like threatening arms, and body and legs like a witch's taking a leap.

" 'What can that long, ugly bird have been about in those chimneys?' asked Hal Stuart, in equal astonishment with us. 'Just see!' he continued; 'does it not look like a horrible human being shaking its arms over the house?—and hear that croaking cry!'

" 'No look dar—no look dar! Massa Hal! Massa John!' cried out old Sanchra, his back still turned to the rising bird—'dat ghose—farrack' —(I suppose that was the name in his lingo for a spectre)—'debble bird—come in, Sanchra tell, he shadder you.'

"But we did not go in notwithstanding 'Sanchra tell,' and the witch-like bird, after poising itself for a moment over the chimney-tops, flew off, with a long hoarse screech, to the river. Then Sanchra turned and called loudly after the disappearing bird, in words unintelligible to us, throwing handfuls of sand in the direction it flew. The old negro was greatly excited, and when his incantation to the departing bird was finished, he sank down on the doorstep, still following the 'farrack' with his eyes and indistinct mutterings, until it was lost to sight over the swamp beyond the river.

"'That "*farrack*," "*debble bird*," fellows,' said John, 'is just nothing more nor less than a very old, long-bodied, turkey-buzzard. Now, Sanchra, why are you such a fool? It does very well for other niggers to act in that way, and tell all sorts of nonsense about the big house there, but come, now, tell us what you really do know.'

"The old man only shook his head.

"'Well, what have you ever heard or seen, to make you call it a haunted house?'

"He shook his head again and again, but after a few moments of quiet, he answered hesitatingly, —'Nigger see tuth tings an' tell—den farrack cum back, an' few days crow pick nigger bones. Me no tell; black crow not hab Sanchra bones yet. No, no, no, massa; young fool nigger tell, not de old Aff-kane.' He got shaking his head again, and laughing grimly.

"'No matter, Sanchra,' I struck in, 'about how the house is haunted, or what you have seen, but tell me the story of *why* it is haunted. You belonged to the old Governor, and have always lived here: what was done that he left that big house to go to ruin?'

"'A-r-r-h! A-r-r-h!' (exclamations he made something between an *ah* and a sharp cry of pain) 'bad, bad, bad; but sittee down, yun massas, old Sanchra tell.'

"But, boys, it is no use for me to attempt the story in the way Sanchra told it. We made out what he meant, because we were used to hearing his strange gibberish; but I couldn't repeat it, and if I could, you wouldn't understand half, so to get the facts of it, and these I afterwards learned were facts: —

"The Governor and his wife had an only son, who, notwithstanding all their love and care, grew up to be a drinking, gambling, cowardly young man. Every dissipated, selfish, riotous young blood in St. Augustine, or from the plantations about, was his companion. When his parents were in town, this miserable fellow, Gus ——, would go off to the plantation, taking with him a set of his favorite associates. When his parents were at the plantation, the poor reckless beast of a son, who seemed without natural affection or a sentiment of right, transferred his orgies to the town. At length, almost heart-broken, and in despair because of this son, and yet striving in every way to save him from harm and disgrace, the parents, when the lad was only nineteen, moved away entirely from the plantation, and left it to the habitation of the ruined young man, in the hope that they might thereby save him from the greater dangers and crimes of a town. They left him there as they might have left him in a mad-house or jail. He, much delighted with this action of his parents, immediately turned the old house into a court of riot. Surrounded by boon companions, he carried on a reign of gambling and drunkenness, while the poor negroes lived in constant fear of their lives. However, the rule of wickedness lasted but a few months. One Christmas time the number of his boon companions was increased, and a course of revelry, wilder than ever before, filled the old house for days and nights with noise and rioting horrible enough to have driven from its once cheerful hearths and protecting rafters every guardian saint of the past. Over the cards and wine one night, Gus —— and one of his guests quarreled. The lie was given, a blow passed, and they were separated. Gus —— was a coward, but overcome by rage and crazy with drink, he insisted as fiercely as his adversary on an immediate duel. To this new excitement the companions of the two young men readily acceded, and the arrangements made were that the weapons should be pistols, and that the principals should be left, one at each extremity of the long dining-room, to advance and shoot at pleasure after the others had darkened the room completely, withdrawn themselves, and given a certain signal, which was to be the popping of a champagne cork in the hall. Just imagine the cold-blooded indifference and trifling of such a proceeding; they were laughingly ready to signal the probable death of one or both of their number, by the pop of champagne. Every preparation was quickly made. There was no chance given for reconciliation, nor time for calm thought with either poor victim.

One was impatient even of the few minutes. He was mad to take the life of his *host* whom he had helped on in wickedness for years, and whose purse he had lived on for months. But the poor, miserable lad, Gus ——, came to his senses in the little gasp of time left him. From the frenzy of passion and heat of wine, he fell into the paralysis of abject terror. Yet what could he do in those few moments, whilst the tables and chairs were moved, the pistols loaded, the ashes trampled down on the great open chimney-place, and the candles blown out. He could not escape nor confess his fear, and there was no chance for apology.

"The doors closed, the keys were turned in the locks, and presently there sounded from without the signal for the duellists!

"The companions in the hall were to enter with lights when two shots had been fired. Each combatant had a double-barreled pistol, and the idea was that when each one had had one shot at his adversary, the contest should cease; or that if one fired, killing his adversary without a return shot, he, the survivor, should fire his remaining barrel. Of course, the supposition was naturally that there would be no firing until the parties in the dark room were body to body. Eagerly the eight or ten gentlemanly villains waited to catch some hearing of the fight. There might be a scuffle as the two met in the dark, before they shot. A minute passed; two; three. Ten minutes went by, and yet no noise was heard, save sometimes a step, now slow and hardly audible — as one or the other of the fighters was supposed to steal quietly about the dark chamber in bloody search of his opponent — then loud and quick, as if one sought the other in a rush. No shot. All quiet. Minutes and minutes went by. How strange they could not meet! What did it mean? Suddenly there resounded through the house the report of a pistol. Again deep silence — prolonged from minute to minute. A quarter of an hour must have passed without another sound from the duellists' room except the footsteps, quicker and quicker, louder and louder, of one or of both the adversaries!

"A second report! immediately the men in the hall rushed, each bearing a candle, into the dining-room. Slowly the powder cleared before the lights. In the centre of the scene stood Gus' opponent. As the darkness broke, his eyes quickly and sharply sought the floor on every side, and peered into the corners and remaining shadows for him whom he had slain. He knew he had shot him. He had almost felt his body, and his breath had touched his cheek. There was no return to his shot. He waited — waited. Then he had searched for his prostrate foe, feeling through the blackness. Here and there, following the walls, and then crossing from side to side. 'Where is he?' the survivor tremblingly thought; 'with the report of the pistol I heard him fall, but I have not heard a word — breath — a moan!' He hurried in his search. At length he could bear the mystery and blackness no longer. Trembling from head to foot, he stopped in the darkness and fired his second barrel overhead. The eyes of the incomers had followed those of him who turned in fear and astonishment from side to side of the room, the discharged pistol still held above his head. *No foe remained, dead or alive!*

"The amazement of all the party was tinged with superstition. They broke in a crowd upon the scene where they had pictured the contest and heard the firing, and here stood one terrified looking man, peering speechlessly and as vainly as they to discover his dead adversary. When practical coolness had recovered its place, the party sought some solution to this mystery. By the doors, Gus —— could only have come to those in the hall. By the windows — ah, there was one unfastened, though closed all but a crack. How was it possible for him to have opened that without noise, pushed back the shutter without admitting air and light, got out, and closed all again, unknown to the man who was keenly searching for him in the same room? Impossible; and yet he was gone, and by that way alone was there any means of escape. Immediately, and even in the midnight, the mad party rushed out to search the negro cabins, the swamps, roads, and woods lying near the house. Through the night, and after daylight, the hunt continued, enjoyed, too, by the heartless crew, more than if the prey was a boar or deer. It was their host, their late boon companion, whom they were hunting. When an overseer, who happened to meet them, asked, 'What are you after?' the reply was, 'A coward!'

"The hunt ended without capture of the game. No trace of Gus —— was ever discovered; but, when investigation of the doings of that night was made, and the confessions of some of the parties in the affair heard, public opinion decided that the stories of Gus ——'s friends were all framed on one concerted falsehood, to hide, probably, the *murder* of their host, and that no doubt they had thrown the body in the river, or buried it secretly. From that day the old house had stood there deserted. As it was left by the rioters, so it remained; the chimneys unwarmed by fire, furniture in disorder, doors ajar, dust and cobwebs on everything, and inside and outside it looked as if peace and happiness could never make a home there, where the heavy breath of past horrors seemed always to linger.

"Well, when we discovered the whole story of the tragedy that had given our old house the character of being haunted, we longed all the more to discover *how* it was haunted; and that Christmas time, a few weeks after Sanchra pointed out the weird, hovering bird to us, we passed, by necessity, a night in the house of horror. You see, we got up a regular hunt, which we were to enjoy on the day before Chris — But halloo, fellows!" said Hazelteen, in a changed voice, coming out from the spell, making the rest of us oblivious to everything but the scenes and incidents on the Florida plantation; "look here, it must be one o'clock. Let us break off, and get to bed. I guess the rest of the 'Haunted House' will keep until another night."

CHAPTER X.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB."—CONCLUSION OF HAZELTEEN'S STORY.

THE first meeting had proved our Club a success, but a second assembly was deferred by a succession of misfortunes many days, and as one of our laws was to the effect that no story intended for or continued to any sitting of the "Once Upon a Time Club" should be made known, either in part or in whole, to any member or members of our society, except at the regular meetings, we could not draw another word of the "Haunted House" from Hazleteen, and yet each day for a week and more some one of us, in impatient interest, was trying to lead dear Will to a hint or better of what the adventure turned out; but neither stratagem nor direct attack brought anything more satisfactory than a "Who knows?" from Will, or a shake of his head. It is easy enough to wait for continuations of newspaper and magazine stories. These we *read*, and then they are hardly ever true. Beside which, we know just when we shall learn the rest, and there is no hope deferred. But here was a true story, a real adventure of Bill Hazelteen's, coming from his own lips too, and yet, waiting anxiously for each night to hear more, each night we were disappointed. But there came finally a last postponement or accident to the "Once Upon a Time Club" during that moon, and in another twenty-four hours we were met in safety at our chosen place, to listen to "The Conclusion of the Haunted House."

"Hal Stuart's father owned a plantation about five miles from our St. John's River place, and his parents lived there from October to July. Hal had invited my brother John and me to pass our Christmas vacation with him. That was grand, for it furnished the opportunity we longed for to pass a night in the Haunted House. We had never been forbidden outright to stay there over night, but yet we knew our parents would prefer that we should not do so, and whenever we had started on our hunting parties to the St. John's plantation, they had always told us to be back by eight or nine o'clock the same night. Now in this case I thought that being over at the Stuarts' house, father and mother would not think of our sleeping in the Haunted House, and therefore would say nothing to forbid it directly or indirectly. But when John and I came to talk this over a few days before the twenty-fifth of December, we saw that by such a course we should really disobey our parents as much as if we boldly acted in defiance of an actual command, for we knew their wishes, and to oppose those wishes was to disobey. 'At any rate,' said John, — and I tell you, fellows, brother John never could do anything that was in the least mean, — 'at any rate,' said he, 'it will not be manly and straightforward, Will, so we had better ask permission, whether we are refused or not.' That was hard, and it looked very much as if we were to lose our promised adventure. However, a night or two before going to Hal Stuart's, we made the request of father and mother, and, much to our delight and astonishment, it was granted, after a few jokes from father, and many cautions about blankets, fires, etc., from mother. Christmas came on Thursday that year, — it was the year before I came to boarding-school, — and we started early Wednesday morning for the Stuarts' plantation. Although it was only fourteen or fifteen miles from town, yet we wanted to have as much time there with Hal as possible, and he had told us that if we could get there early, we should have a deer drive. That was enough to start us out of bed at any hour, and when we called Scip and Zanoni to saddle up, it was just daybreak. John's horse felt pretty well, and when John, after a hard struggle, got his legs fairly clasped about him, the fiery fellow reared so that Scip (he was an old negro that had had charge of father's stable since he was a lad) begged John to get off. The restlessness of John's young stallion set an example that my colt, a marsh takey,[1] was quick to follow; so I gave him rein, and John was soon clattering behind me at a slapping rate. Away we went galloping through two miles of soft carpeted pine wood, John's two young hounds trying to keep up with us, and yelping with fun. When the stage road was reached, the edge was taken off our horses' sharpness, and they and the dogs came down to a more reasonable gait. And then we boys, as horses and dogs trotted easily along, and the pleasant scents of pine and honeysuckle regaled us, fell to imagining the old Spanish days in Florida. But the sun was soon brightening the tree-tops, and Speed, one of the hounds, gave voice that he had started a rabbit or something, so we left the troop of men in armor and the banner of the Cross, and put spurs to our horses. As those we had journeyed with for a few minutes faded out of sight, and were lost in the same forests their spirits inhabit, we galloped on quickly again, with a shout to the hounds and a laugh for our reveries, and in an hour more drew rein at the Stuarts' porch; and after a hearty luncheon, prepared for our visit to the St. John's plantation, and our 'Haunted House.'

---

[1] A small horse, of much endurance and spirit, that is a native of some of the Southern sea-islands, and other salt borders; perhaps they are descendants of the Indian horse. They go wild in droves, from which they are often taken young, to be broken to saddle use.

"Throughout the South, the negroes have three days' vacation at Christmas time, — three days when they are entirely their own masters to go and come as they please. It is a time of great merriment and rejoicing, and their custom is to travel by road and river to the nearest town with a stock of eggs, poultry, vegetables, and flowers for sale. Christmas being the negroes' market-day, they profit by it, and every town market-place is the scene of the gayest and most chattery business imaginable. With the profits of their sales they invest largely in gay handkerchiefs, tobacco, and *whisky*, and the two days following they make a rollicking time of. Plantation work closes on the afternoon of December the twenty-fourth, and by eight o'clock that night the roads are lively with groups of men and women, each with a bundle hung to a stick over his or her shoulder, and all laughing, talking, and yelling as they plod along; whilst from the river plantations large rafts loaded with crowds of them, each raft with its fiddler and one or two pine fires, fore and aft, to light the voyage, merrily float down the stream to the songs of their noisy, happy freight. Now, as we fellows thought that the negroes on our plantation might have something to do with the *haunting* of the old Governor's house, we planned our trip so as not to reach the St. John's plantation until the black people were on their way to town, and we also determined not to let ourselves be seen by any of the negroes, but to avoid the cabins and get to the old house secretly. Having arranged everything — taking our guns, matches, blankets for a spread on the floors, provisions for a supper and breakfast, and all other things we believed necessary for our mysterious enterprise — we set out on foot about six in the evening for the Haunted House, making our way through the woods, and over the fields, so as to avoid the negroes on the paths and roads.

"It was after seven, but yet light, when we crept through the wild orange grove at the south end of the old house, that, gray and mournful, seemed the home of the many shadows stealing more noiselessly and stealthily even than we up the broad, moss-grown steps of the long piazza. We looked carefully about: not a soul saw us. The solemn oak avenue was as lifeless as the river seen through its darkening perspective. As we pushed open the creaking door, a small snake hissed at us from under our entering feet, and slid away to a hole in the hallway floor. As it would not do to light candles in the old house, and betray our presence there at night, it was necessary to make a survey of our ghostly quarters as quickly as possible. The result of our hurried, but nevertheless careful reconnoissance, was that, first, we found the main hall we had entered to be very wide, and reaching through the house to the back door. There were a few tall-back, strangely carved chairs, standing here and there in desolate disorder; and a large picture-frame, unfilled by a canvas, hung, cobwebbed and dusty, by one string on the wall. A broad stairway, whose heavy banisters were bent and loose, led to the floor above. This was the hall where the revelers years ago had waited for the pistol-shots of their comrades, the duelists, in the room that we entered next on the right of the hall. It was a room of the same length as the hall, that is, the breadth of the house, and it was almost as long one way as another. Evidently it had been the great dining-room. The rottening remnants of what had once been a thick, elegant carpet still covered the floor, and a handsome extension table, on which were piled chairs, chandeliers, and vases, occupied one side of the room. I believe this apartment, as indeed most parts of the house, had never been disturbed since the morning after the duel, when the guests of the lost man, unsuccessful in their hunt, and appalled by the seeming mystery of his disappearance, hurried off to pleasanter scenes. My father had bought the house just as it stood, half-furnished and comfortless; and as he did not care to live there, and only bought it as a part of the plantation he wished to cultivate, he left it everything unchanged, except where the hand of time had wasted, since the Christmas feast of the Governor's son. We looked around this room with the interest arising from its history: we fancied how the duelists, the one bloodthirsty, the other in terror, had glided about in the dark, their weapons held ready for the sudden encounter. And whilst we looked here and there, our minds excited by the scene called up, one of us discovered in the wall, a few feet from the great open fire-place, a bullet-hole about breast-high from the floor. That, no doubt, was the result of the first shot, when Gus ——'s opponent fired, thinking he and his adversary were in contact; and in the ceiling overhead was the mark of the second shot, the signal that the duel was ended. On the hearth there lay the pile of ashes of the fire tramped out on that terrible night. But, if I describe every one of the many rooms of that large and strangely fashioned house, we shall sit here all night. I will only say that the other rooms on that floor, and there were five on each side of the entrance hall, were mostly unfurnished, dark, and dusty. Under this first floor was an immense cellar, and on the second floor, that over the dining-room, were twelve or fourteen bed-chambers, opening so oddly one into the other and into the hallway, and so perplexing with corners, windows, and closets, that to find one's way through the labyrinth was a difficult task in the now fast-darkening night; so we chose the central and largest front bed-chamber as a sleeping place, and there threw down our blankets.

"In our survey of the first floor, there was one room at a corner of the house, the door of which we could not open, and, in the cellar, we found steps leading up to this room, which was apparently entered from those steps by a trap-door; but we could not lift the trap-door, fastened in a manner we could not discover in the dark.

"'Ho, ho!' said John, 'if this is a Haunted House, then here lives His Ghostship sure as shooting.'

"The last thing we did, just before it grew too dark to do anything, was to pick up all the dead branches and kindling within ten yards of the house, and lay them on the dining-room fire-place, ready to kindle when the ghosts had gone, or when they persistently refused to appear. We joked very bravely in this way, but, in reality, it was not very good fun to wait without fire or candle in that grim, mouldy house, as the darkness crowded through every hole and window until we could not see a comrade's face, even when we could feel his hand. The front door had been closed and bolted before that, and we had gone up the creaking stairway to our chosen room, to wait there in gloom and discomfort the drama of the night. Soon the night-breeze rose from the river, and, shaking first the great limbs of the oak avenue, moaned and whistled whisperingly through the countless cracks and crevices of our Haunted House. Then it would die away for a moment, to come again with a faint rumbling in the big chimneys, sounding exactly like the slow rustling of a garment. However, we were not faint-hearted. Darkness, the night-wind, and the creaking of boards we cared not for; and soon we had almost forgot their dreariness in watching the scene from the window; for the plantation rafts, from many and many places miles up the river, were constantly floating by in our sight. It was a splendid thing to watch, — this Christmas Eve river-festival of the negroes; the water shone so flickeringly from the red glare of the fat pine fires on each end of the rafts; the foliage over the river, on the opposite bank, was so dark and heavy; and the black figures — in one boat all but the steersman — grouped over a blaze, as a story-teller held them bound by some probably weird romance. Another raft drifted in view, with the darkies dancing like demons; whilst an old fiddler, perched on some high place, worked himself like a steam pump to lead, with his music, the combined frenzy and jollity of the dancers. Up and over them curled the black wreaths from the blazing logs, and, every few seconds, a united yell — a 'O-y-ha-a!' — broke in a sort of laughing shriek, to time and fire their performances. Again a raft came by; this time the negroes in different groups, standing or sitting, whilst they joined, with all the passion of negro music, in a favorite chorus. Now and then, a figure would detach itself from the groups to kick a log in the fire, and then a great shower of sparks shot up into the sky.

"In an hour or two, most of them had gone by. It was only occasionally that a piece of song or a shout reached us from the river, and sometimes there were long periods when the only sound was the low voice of the wind. We were feeling very tired and drowsy, and growing skeptical and indifferent to ghosts, spirits, or anything so immaterial, when, suddenly, the ceiling of our room grew light. It was nearly twelve, and the full moon was rising. When it had climbed above the tops of the great trees in the swamp opposite,

"Another raft drifted in view, with the darkies dancing like demons." Page 182.

we, at the proposition of Hal Stuart, started in stocking feet, and each one of us carrying a gun or pistol, to again inspect the Haunted House. The haunters had not come to us, so we must go to them. From room to room we went, as quietly as possible, but to find only dust, moonlight, and repose. A loose board cracked under foot, a door creaked on its rusted hinges: in one room a bat darted by, and rose in the chimney; in another, a cricket set up his piping. That was all; but, in returning to our bedroom through the hallway, John opened a side-light of the front door, and immediately called us, in an undertone, to come there. We did so, and saw what had caught his attention, — a flatboat, with four negroes in it, coming from the middle of the stream directly to the boat-steps at the foot of our avenue. 'What does that mean, eh, fellows?' asked John, in a whisper. 'Don't know,' we answered, 'but we can watch them without being seen ourselves.' Under the bluff they were out of sight; but, in a few moments, we heard the boat bump, and then a rattling as the poles were laid on board. A little after that, the four black chaps showed themselves on the bank. Each one had a large bag over his shoulders, and they walked slowly, as if their loads were very heavy. They were coming up the avenue, straight for the house. 'Those are the ghost, by thunder!'

"'Yes, I guess so,' said Hal, 'and what shall we do now?' John spoke up quickly: 'I know;

you fellows keep perfectly quiet whilst I run upstairs;' and up he went, three steps at a time, but without a bit of noise, and in ten seconds down he came again, with an old sheet on his arm. This he threw hastily over himself, head and all, lifting it with his raised arms so high above his shoulders that he seemed a giant. 'Gather it around my waist — quick, fellows! Now, when I say "Ready!" you two open the door, as suddenly as you can, and stand behind it, — out of sight, mind you, and have your shooting-irons all ready, in case things go wrong!' We were ready before the negroes were within ten feet of the piazza, and could watch them easily through the half-closed side-light. They advanced, talking in a grumble, and evidently feeling the weight of their burdens. Arrived at the steps they let down their bags, and, whilst they rested for a minute, turned their big white-balled eyes up to the house.

"'All right,' said one; 'dar's the ghose house. and 'ere, p'r'aps, the ghoseses — yha, yha! le's hirry up. Cum, Jake; cum, July.'

"Up they came — to the top step.

"'Ready!' whispered John, as he took a step into the middle of the hall, and we pulled back the door with a jerk. John *did* look frightfully, as he stood there in the moonlight, bent forward, and his arms stretched upwards like wings, just as if he were about to make a swoop and light on the intruders; and his deep voice rolled out slowly and sepulchrally, 'Enter! Enter! I wait you!' Back went the biggest nigger, as if he were shot, heels over head, down the steps. Another dropped his bag, and, with a screech of agony, ran the length of the piazza, and leaped into the garden. The third fell prostrate in the doorway, shaking and groaning.

"Off went John's sheet. 'Now, boys, let's pin these black thieves, — these nigger ghosts!' But, by the time we had put down our guns and rushed forward, the two fallen rascals were on their feet, and if ever I saw a scramble and a rush it was then; for John had grabbed the leg of the chap on the piazza, and, unable to rise until he was released, he, crazy with fear, crawled on three limbs down the steps, and then, kicking loose, sprang off like a bull.

"They were gone, but there lay the bags, and the boat was left fast to the landing.

"We pulled the bags in, bolted the door, and now lighted our candles. Having gotten the bags in the dining-room, we slit the strings and poured out on the floor a medley of stolen goods, — clothes, pieces of household silver, bottles of wine, groceries, and odds and ends of every description. 'Haven't we routed out the spirits from these premises though?' said Hal, who was in high spirits. 'Haunted House — pshaw! Gay and festive nigger-cave, I call it.'

"'Yes, Hal, and that we have this time found out "de g*h*ustibus non est disputandum."' Fortunately for John's joke, Hal and I had read enough Latin to understand it.

"'Now, boys,' I proposed, 'let's have a good supper; here is a bottle of sherry, and a pair of chickens ready cooked; we can add what we brought for breakfast, and have a jolly Christmas spree. The ghosts are gone, and in two or three hours there will be daylight.'

"John seconded my movement. 'Up, jolly men, let's feast and make merry. Out with the big table, down with the chairs.'

"The spread was soon before us; six candles were burning, and we all ready to turn to, when we were reminded by Hal that the pile of logs and kindling were yet unlighted on the hearth. The idea of a Christmas feast without a blazing, snapping fire! So I got down on my knees and put a match to the kindlings. The flames licked about, and spread to the logs, but the smoke swelled out into the room, not a puff rising in the chimney: yet the fire blazed, increasing the smoke so that we were almost blinded. 'Why, there must be something stuffed in the chimney,' said I; and ran for a long pole that I had seen in an adjoining room. Returned with that, I pushed it up the chimney and poked about, for it had touched something in the way. A stronger shove, and down rolled an indistinguishable mass on to the fire, choking it for a moment, but then the flames flashed out again; firing what was ignitible of the fallen substance. Horrible — horrible to say —

there, in the red blaze, we saw a *human skeleton!* The skull rolled out even to the carpet, while the remnants of clothing that had held the rest together were in a moment consumed in the devouring fire.

"What remained of the Governor's son was the skeleton, now blackening on the hearth-stone that he had cursed and made desolate by his wickedness.

"The long mystery was unraveled: driven by his cowardice, the poor, miserable Gus had crawled up the chimney, to escape his adversary's pistol bullet. Caught fast there, — the house deserted by his late comrades, — he had perished in a long agony.

"And so, with that last coming of the negro river-thieves to the place they had for years used as a deposit for stolen goods, and the horror that afterward drove away the jollity of our Christmas feast, ended the horror of our 'Haunted House.'"

CHAPTER XI.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — ROUGH'S STORY OF THE OLD MAN AND THE APE.

It was Rough's turn for the next story, but more than a month passed before the "Once Upon a Time Club" met again, and then, not upon the roof, of a hot moonlight night, but in the ruin of an old saw-mill in Sleepy Hollow, and on a gray, blustering autumn Saturday.

The open end of the saw-mill, into which there blew, with every backhander of the northeaster, little flocks of fluttering, crackling leaves, — yellow, scarlet, purple, oaks, maples, chestnuts, and all the rich variegations and variations of leaf, color, and kind, — looked down a brook that hurried, with a steady run here and a sudden jump there, to the Hudson, six miles away. It was a cool gray day, but there were pleasant summery vistas through the partly stripped trees over the brook-course to the southwest, — glimpses of view that seemed in contrast to the sound of the harsh wind that scolded and threatened against the wall-side of our retreat. Although this sitting of the "Once Upon a Time Club" was at a point seven miles distant from our boarding-school, yet we had brought Rough, as he always travelled with us, on our backs. However, we got a lift over part of the road in a farm-wagon that was going in our direction.

And now as Rough was about to tell his story, he sat facing the out-of-door scene, with his back against one of the sides of the chimney-place, bending a stick against his knees, and now and then turning his head to spit accurately and thoughtfully into the blaze.

His voice was clear, strong, and deep.

"Mind you, fellows, I want it understood that I am not to be asked whether my story is true or not. It is no matter whether I heard it from some one else or made it up myself. Perhaps I was one of the actors in it, only under another name and on better legs. Perhaps — a good many things. At any rate, here is the story:

"Alden Holly — none of you fellows ever knew him — was a good one, I tell you. He is a detective officer in New York now. When he was a boy they called him Lucky Holly, but I don't believe much in luck. *Luck* — pshaw! — call it, I say, good sense, steady nerves, pluck. From the time he fell out of a second-story window on to a big Newfoundland dog until he was a man, he kept constantly falling into all kinds of dangers, but always lighting feet first on something soft. Alden was an only son, and his father was a rich man for those times and that part of the country. He can't be a detective officer now for want of money, I guess, but just because that sort of business —

where a long-auger brain, quick wit, ready hands, steel nerves, and unflinching pluck are wanted — is what he loves and shines in. Once when Alden Holly was about fourteen years old, he was at home from boarding-school in vacation, when something occurred which occasioned more than nine days' talk in the rustic community around his father's home. Mr. Holly, being a rich and generous man, lived in some style, having a large house and ample grounds, and entertaining his friends with the best of everything he could command.

"In the same county were three or four other rich families at distances of ten and twelve miles from one another, and in the course of the three years preceding this vacation time of young Holly at home, each one of these few great houses had been robbed. At one time two of them were broken into during one week. Then eight months passed, and another was robbed. After that there was a period of two years, and the fourth was entered and emptied. In every case the burglar or burglars took everything of value — silver from the closets, money from desks, and watches even from beneath the pillows of the sleepers. Yet not the slightest trace was ever found of the offenders. Whether one or a dozen men executed these skillful robberies, whether they commenced the forays from within or without, whether the robber or robbers were black or white, male or female, could not be discovered. Not a clew of any kind was there by which to track them. The best police officers from large cities came to the county, lived there for weeks at different times, left detectives who prowled about for months, and yet, though, too, the whole county was in a fever of excitement and indignation after each new robbery, nothing was discovered. In those three years, not a single article of the large amount of stolen property was ever recognized among all the other discoveries of turned-up plunder in the large cities where such goods find circulation and market. The county magistrates were utterly perplexed and humbled, and the crafty city police, with all their smartness, were brought to a stand without sight or scent.

"I like to hear of a big burglary — don't you? How it was planned, executed, and finally its authors tracked out. I'll bet you all do. To Alden Holly, those daring and successful robberies in his own county were subjects of the greatest interest, and he used to study them out as faithfully as the officers whose business was to do that. The puzzle of how it was all done worried him as much as them. But somehow neither he nor his father ever imagined they should suffer from the rascals. Their house, they thought, was too well fastened and guarded to tempt robbery.

"The county in which Alden Holly lived was an agricultural county, not very thickly settled, which bordered on the sea. There were only a few rich families in it, as I have said. The county town, so called, was a small village with a court-house in it. Lying in the sea, from half a mile to a mile off the coast of this county, were a number of small low islands, some barren and unsightly, others wild and well timbered, and yet one or two that were salt swamps, swept by every tide. These islands were all lonely places, seldom visited. To two or three, where wild fowl abounded, some of the gentlemen of leisure in the county used to go for shooting in the fall; and one of the islands, the wildest and most inaccessible, — because of a wide border of salt-marsh, too nasty to wade through, and too hard to push a boat through, — but the best timbered and most picturesque, had two inhabitants — an old man and an ape. The county people said that these two had been cast ashore there many years ago at the time of a ship-wreck, when a small Cuban brig had sunk just off that island, the man (one of the sailors) escaping with his ape on a raft which the sea tossed up there.

" Alden Holly had twice seen the old man on the rather rare occasions of his visits to the main land, where he came to peddle moss and shells. He was a large, gray, and rough-bearded old man, much bent, and leaning on a long staff. He spoke very little, and then only in broken English, hardly intelligible ; and he seemed a very honest and devout old man, selling his goods cheaply ; and always, when one purchased from him, casting up his eyes to heaven, and ejaculating ' T'ank

God.' He had once or twice brought the ape with him, fastened by a stout chain, but Alden had never seen the two together, and had an intense curiosity to see the beast, that he had heard was about five feet in height, and very savage. So, a year before the occasion of this story, Alden had, in his usual spirit of adventure, embarked one day in a small flat-bottomed boat, to visit Sir Orang-outang's island abode. He got out there safely enough, it being a quiet morning, but he found the usual difficulty in landing. 'So,' thought he, 'that old man is not such a fool as always to travel through a mud-marsh every time he goes to and from his island; I must go about a bit, and find where he does land.' With this intention, he pulled slowly along the shore, until, away on the further side, he discovered a stream like a ditch-course, leading through the marsh. Up that he paddled, and found a good landing. After a few minutes walking on a foot-path, through thick brush and over-reaching vines, he came upon the abode of Sir Orang-outang and master — a house half cave and half cabin — but everthing fastened so that Alden could not effect an entrance. However, it was evident that the two friends were absent, and Alden, after waiting for hours, had to take his journey homeward, unsuccessful in his search. A heavy wind was blowing off the sea now, which soon increased to such a gale, that, in spite of all the boy's efforts, the flat-bottomed boat suddenly turned over on its stomach, and left

Alden fighting in the rough waves. But he managed in a few minutes to climb on the upturned craft, and came ashore, near night, on the top of a breaker, that stove his boat in pieces, and tossed him breathless, wet, and cold, on the stony shore.

"Well, boys, I have had to ramble off some distance since I said that something occurred in Alden's fourteenth year, when he was home in vacation, that made a great excitement in the county. However, — to take it up now, — Alden Holly was at home, and upon awaking one morning an impression, like the remembrance of a dream, came over him, that he had seen during his sleep, or partial sleep, a very small man glide across his room and get out of the window. 'What a strange idea,' he thought, 'to wake up with. It's funny I should only remember that part of my dream, just like one single scene out of a play — funny, that it is, but I must look at my watch and see if it is time yet to turn out.' So he put his hand under the pillow — fumbled about — then turned the pillow over — then pulled off the bolster; *no watch was there.* The house had been robbed: every ounce of silver taken; four hundred and fifty dollars in gold gone from his father's secretary, and three watches taken out of the rooms. As Alden, at the breakfast-table, was telling how he had seen, though he had thought it only a dream at the time, a dwarf of a man cross his room and get out of the window, he said, in answer to the eager inquiries that hailed this statement, — 'I don't remember the face at all, and don't know whether I saw it, but the figure was a small one, I tell you.'

"'About what size?" some one asked.

"'Well — let me see.' Just at that moment, a little woman not more than five feet high, who had been working in the Holly kitchen for about six weeks, and who had come to Mr. Holly's housekeeper in seeming distress, begging for employment, appeared at the door of the large butler's pantry adjoining the dining-room, to hand a plate of cakes to the waiter. Alden's eyes happened to fall on her just as he was trying to tell the robber's size, and he continued, — 'Why, just about the size, both in height and slimness, of Jane there.'

"With no better success than in the investigation of the other burglaries, the neighbors and the city police searched for a clew to the robbers. Every corner of the county was pried into; every suspicious person examined; but all in vain.

"Alden Holly was with the officers in all their searchings, and he was present, too, at all their deliberations in his father's house. The police were much pleased by the keen interest the boy took in the hunt, and they were astonished and assisted often by the wisdom of his suggestions. Never in his life had Alden been so wrapped up in any one subject as he was in that of the burglaries. He thought of it by day, and dreamed of it by night. And he had certain undefined suspicions or guesses of how the affair had been effected, which seemed so vague and without reason, that he would not mention them to any one, but kept puzzling them over in his own head, hoping all the while that some discovery or theory of the detectives might coincide with and strengthen his singular ideas.

"All this time his vacation was drawing nearer and nearer to a close. Before that day came, however, there were two little occurrences that were of much consequence, though they appear very slight. He was at breakfast with his father one morning, and Jane, the little woman I have told you of, was waiting on them in the absence of the regular servant. Purposely Alden asked of his father, whilst he all the time kept his eyes on Jane, — 'Father, have you any objection to my going over to the old man's island this morning? I have never seen that Orang-outang yet, and am very curious on the subject.' Jane heard the request with evident nervousness. Alden went immediately from the breakfast to the coast, where he got a boat and crossed to the island. The old man met him as sullenly as he did all visitors to his peculiar domain, affecting to misunderstand his questions, and making short and indefinite answers: but when Alden said, — 'But I came especially to see your ape: where is he?' the old hermit was very careful and obliging in his account of how the ape had escaped, as he would sometimes, and that though he could not find him on the island, yet he *was there*, hidden somewhere, and would soon return.

"Alden was to go back to boarding-school in a week after this incident, and the second occurrence that influenced the after-course of events, probably was the rather boastful statement that Alden made to his father, a few mornings after his visit to the island, and which he did most carelessly, ignorant of the fact that the same little Jane was close on the other side of the closet door, which stood ajar. They were talking, as so often they did, of the burglary, and finally Alden said, 'Father, I know, I am sure, something sharp about the affair, and I can't tell you a word now of my reasons or suspicions. I shall study them up, and let you know when I get back to school, with time to weigh coolly all I have picked up; but I'll bet little John Knob, with all his smartness, that I will unravel the mystery before he does.'

"The day before Alden's departure for school, it happened that little Jane came, with tears in her eyes and a black-sealed letter in her hand, to beg Mr Holly to let her go home to Overstone, one hundred miles away, where the only relative she had on earth was dying. She had just got a letter from the lady at whose house her relative worked, telling her to come quickly, she said. Of course Mr. Holly said 'Yes,' and I shall add here to his 'yes,' that little Jane never reappeared at the Holly place.

"It was on a Wednesday morning that Alden Holly drove over to the county town and took the cars for his boarding-school, which was in Napville, sixty miles off. Soon after the cars started, a man entered the carriage in which Alden was seated, and took the place beside him. He was a good-looking man — that is, he was well and cleanly dressed, strongly built, and had dark curly hair and beard; but the expression of his face was reckless and cruel. He appeared to be a seafaring man, or, at least, to have been such at some time of his life. In a sociable, jovial manner, he soon entered into conversation with the boy beside him, and made himself so interesting that Alden was delighted with his companion. As they drew near one of the railroad stations, he said, 'Young gentleman, I wish you were a poor boy with a taste for the sea, for I should like mightily to ship you for a voyage that a trim little brig of mine will soon make from Grayhead, two miles from the station we are coming to. In all my sea-going — and it has been considerable — I never saw such a swan of a craft. Come now, my young Captain, and jump out with me here to see my *Sweetheart* — that is what I call her. We can ride over to the Head, and you can take the three o'clock train to finish your journey by. Say you will, now'— and with that he gave Alden a warm, hearty slap on the knee.

"Alden was much pleased by the manner of this frank, brave-seeming tar, and he was somewhat flattered by the notice the man took of him. Moreover, he did above all things like tarpaulins, canvas, salt-water, and all that brotherhood. And add to all, there was no need for him to be at his boarding-house before night, and his ticket would carry him as well by the next train ; so, after a moment's thought, he answered, —

"'Thank you, I will go with you. I should like it first rate.'

"In a moment the whistle blew and they were at the station. The boy and his nautical friend started on foot for the Grayhead wharves. It was a cool, blustering day, something like this, and the autumn wind came scudding over Grayhead harbor to nip the cheeks of the two companions, blow open their jackets, and remind them of luncheon; so Blackbeard proposed to Alden that they should step into a tavern before going down to the brig, and get a bite of something. To which Alden assented, and they entered an inn where the few sailors around the Head loved to congregate. The public room was full of oaths, blue-jackets, and smoke. Blackbeard, greeting many of the men by name, seated himself with Alden by a small table in a corner, and called for beer and sausages. You must know that thus far Alden had enjoyed his adventure greatly. He had borne a brisk part in the conversation, and now that he entered the tavern so intimately with Blackbeard, who was evidently a big gun among the company there, he felt the full charm of a scene and act like those we read of in sea novels, — you know the kind, fellows: little chapters in port, where crews of Captain Marryatt, or men from that 'Cruise of the Midge,' or companions of 'The Green Hand, or 'White Jacket,' meet in low sanded bar-rooms; where small, wind-shaken windows look out on a harbor, and a neat, saucy little bar-maid brings them beer and cigars, and smiles coquettishly at their jokes. Yes, he felt precisely as if he had been suddenly clapped down into the reality of one of those fascinating pages; so he nibbled away at his prog — so Blackbeard called the sausage and biscuits — and drank his beer thirstingly. But whilst Blackbeard told him of some wild sea adventure, he felt himself growing very sleepy, and unaccountably confused in his thoughts and hearing. In five minutes more, his head had fallen on the table, and he was snoring heavily.

"Alden Holly had been drugged.

"When the poor boy recovered consciousness, he found himself lying on his back, his hands tied, in a dark, cellar-smelling place. His head was hot and throbbing, and of course the strange and terrible circumstances of his situation made him feel very miserable. Determined, with his usual fire, to ascertain at any rate the worst, he called out as loud as his lungs would allow him, until a gleam of light came from an opening above, and he saw descending on a ladder, lantern in hand, an Orang-outang. This brute, having reached the floor, approached him in a nearly erect attitude, sometimes changing a shambling gait for a jump or two. Having come close to Alden, he leaned over him as if for a careful inspection, and Alden, looking with fear into the eyes peering over him, was astonished at the expression of those large intelligent eyes, that seemed to be laughing sneeringly at his misfortune. The ape was gone in a minute, and returned as quickly again, bringing some food in one hand and an axe in the other. The food he put down beside Alden, and, keeping the axe in hand, he then untied the boy's hands. Before Alden had fully recovered from the numbness of his limbs, the strange jailer had left him again alone in his dungeon. Whilst Alden sat up and munched the loaf of bread left him, his mind was very busy, trying to rehearse not only his adventures since taking the cars for boarding-school, and the few but remarkable facts of his present imprisonment, but also all he knew of the burglary at his father's house, and trying, too, to compare and reconcile them with the suspicions that he had once hinted of to his father, — he had only hinted at them, they had appeared too improbable and foundationless at the time, to permit him to disclose them. He had feared he would be laughed at, and yet, notwithstanding his reason had opposed him, he had held those convictions with great faith; 'and now,' he thought, 'I begin to see the proof of them. If it were not for the evidences I thought the burglary furnished, the fright I gave the little Jane, and the visit I paid to the old man when *his ape was absent*, I should never doubt, notwithstanding the human look of those eyes, that the Orang-outang was an Orang-outang, but now I feel sure of something else. O, if I can only get out of this place, won't I fix some scoundrels ?'

"Alden's place of confinement, as I have said, was perfectly dark. Where he lay there seemed to be a bed of rushes or shavings. He felt in his pockets and found *seven* matches. He determined to light one now and see his prison. He struck the match carefully and looked about: yes, he was in a cellar without a window; the room was only about twelve feet square, but it was very deep, — he supposed twenty feet, — and the only apparent mode of entrance and exit was the ladder descending from a trap-door.

"Alden fell asleep again. When he awoke, — probably the next day, — he called out for food. The trap-door was lifted carefully; a loaf of bread was thrown to the prisoner, and then a can of water was lowered by a string. The young prisoner was not to see his jailer or jailers, not even the hideous Orang-outang, again, whilst he remained in the cellar. Having eaten all the food allowed him, the gritty boy set to work for another reconnoissance of his cell — allowing himself three matches this time. Before they and the few shavings he lighted were exhausted, he made a discovery that cheered him greatly. High up in one corner he found what he believed to be an old board, about a foot square, closing up what had once been a small window-place, or opening of some kind. Noiselessly now, and in the dark, he moved the ladder to that corner, and proved his conjecture correct. By the exertion of some strength, he could move the board a little. There were probably earth and stones piled against it from the outside. 'All right,' he said to himself; 'perhaps I shall leave this place to-night. I must be cool and patient, though.' He replaced the ladder, and waited for night, or rather, for the time he supposed to be night. It was a long, long worrying waiting, but when he supposed it must be evening, he heard the sound of feet above, and believed, as was correct, that his captors had come home for supper. Again he anxiously hoped for some other move. After what seemed half a night of suspense, he distinguished footsteps overhead, and this time they grew more distinct all at once, and he could catch the mumble of conversation. It came from the corner over the dead window. There Alden quickly put his ladder, thinking that when those noises ceased, his jailers would probably be asleep, and then for his chance of escape. Standing near the top of the ladder, he found he could just make out a word of their talk now and then, but nothing that taught him anything comprehensible, until, when they once raised their voices as if disputing, he heard this partly broken sentence, — 'I tell you we are in danger — we must be off quickly, you fool;' — there was much apparent quarreling here that he could not understand, they talked so fast and thick, and then he heard, — 'Shut up, Gus; I am sleepy! Don't let's come to a fight, for I can't fight three — an ape, a woman, and a man, dwarfs though you all be.' After time enough had passed, and all the mumbling had ceased, Alden went to work. Half an hour of digging and pushing removed the obstruction, and Alden, by tight squeezing, made his way to the outside. By the light of the stars, he saw, as he expected, that he had been confined in a cellar beneath the old man's cave-house on the island. Quickly as possible he made his way by the path he had before trodden in daylight, to the creek. Striking the three matches remaining to him, he found the old man's boat and oars. When he had pulled around the island, the moon came out, and by that light he made his way quickly and safely to the shore, four miles from his father's house. There he arrived at daylight.

"It was late in the afternoon before a party, hastily organized, and augmented by police, got over to the island. It was deserted; everything left, evidently, in the greatest haste, and about two miles off seaward was a sloop under all the canvas she could carry, standing for the east. But here were the proofs of a regular retreat for the robbers, although nothing of any value was discovered. The booty had probably been taken off from time to time by accomplices afloat. Coming, perhaps, for another cargo, they had arrived in time to carry off the old man and his ape. Nothing more was ever discovered of the scoundrels

But the suppositions, to explain the strange career of the two villains, were, that old age for one, and a perfect orang-outang disguise and adroitness for the other, were the devices to avoid suspicion, whilst the neighborhood of the rich houses was visited. The man's feebleness, devoutness, and broken English, taken with the facts of his apparent poor and hermit-like existence, and that he had no comrade, only an immense ape, shielded him from all suspicion as a most skillful burglar. Added to this, the rarely seen ape was a man — a little, muscular fellow, delicate in form and face, but active as a cat, and not troubled with a beard. In the dress of a woman, he had got entrance into Mr. Holly's house as a domestic, and thus prepared the way for his accomplice. And that accomplice, the apparent old man, was, Alden always thought, the very man who, otherwise disguised, met him in the cars and captured him so adroitly, to prevent the disclosure of the rascalities which Alden had got the scent of. Jane — the ape — saw that Alden vaguely suspected her or him and the ape as identical, and by leaving Mr. Holly's house, managed to get the information to his partner.

"Hi! there, my coves," said Rough, as with a sigh of relief he finished his story, "my yarn is done and I am glad of it. If you don't like it, you can do the other thing." We gave Rough, every one, a commendatory slap on his broad back, and then pitched into our lunch before starting homeward in the autumn storm.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB." — OUR SAILOR-BOY'S STORY OF A CRUISE IN THE "SURF."

"YES, I know this is my turn to spin a yarn — *my turn*, just as if a fellow can get off a story as he might fire off a gun or right-about face — at the word of command."

"Well, you know, MacGray, that is the way in our club. It was resolved we should make a circle and commence with Hazelteen to go round, each with a story."

"Yes, I know it, but it was a foolish arrangement. A fellow ought to tell a story when he feels like it — when it comes *popping* out. The 'Once Upon a Time Club,' or any other story-telling club, ought to be a sort of basket-of-champagne affair, and when some occasion or subject turns off the wires, then pop will come the cork; but we corkscrew a story out of a poor chap deliberately at a fixed time, whether he has any fizzle in him at the time or not. However, law is law, and I shall not mutiny."

By the way MacGray would have had our club managed, I am afraid that at some meetings we should have been without entertainment, whilst at others, two or three would have each a story to tell at the same moment.

This meeting of our club was in December, I think — not long before the Christmas holidays. The sports of early winter, coasting, skating, and sleighing, had so filled up our play-hours, and the closer studies of the second term had so occupied the evenings, that several weeks passed away without the members of the "Once Upon a Time" coming together in the manner we so much enjoyed. At bed-time all were too tired for anything but sleep. On this occasion, however, there was a furious, driving snow-storm, and a dark, cold afternoon, and we gathered in a recitation room to enjoy ourselves with a story before the five o'clock bell should ring for evening prayers. Snow and hail pattered in windy gusts against the glass, but the little cracked stove, with one broken leg held up and tired out of all patience by days and weeks of Latin declensions, Greek measures, Algebraic equations, Geometrical figures, Paley's Philosophy, and French recitations, not a word of which it understood, probably, glowed ruddily to welcome the dear old "Once Upon a Time" comrades in the small circle of its warmth. That crippled old dwarf of a stove, I always thought, had a sympathy with and fondness for us boys; but for the teachers, one and all, it seemed to entertain an obstinate dislike. When the mathematical teacher entered with a class, it generally managed to choke up with ashes and grow cold. With another master, no sooner did his classical hand try to arrange a draft, than it threw off a current of gas. And for poor Monsieur Alphonse, whom it particularly despised as a foreigner, it managed to crack and burn many pairs of long-toed boots, and once went so far in its belligerence as to singe off the rear extremities of a long alpaca coat he was wont to wear. The few pleasant moments in its slavish, melancholy life, were on the rare occasions when, after school-hours, some jolly young rascals loafed into its neighborhood to talk of sports, and homes, and fights — to arrange some adventure or practical joke — to hear a song, or, as now, a story. In study hours, too, it was sometimes brought to rejoice, when some reckless, mutinous boy would give it a pinch of snuff, a piece of onion, or a few grains of pepper, to cook up for the nostrils of our taskmasters. How thoroughly it would do it! This afternoon it was more pleased even than common to see us, — seemed as if it were about to execute a hot little jig on its three short legs and spread feet, and really drew so many rejoicing breaths and whiffs of delight, that in ten minutes it was quite red in the face.

Horace MacGray, yet, after nearly two years of boarding-school discipline, retaining many habits and attitudes of sailor-life, lounged on a backless chair as if it were a capstan, close over the hot dwarf, — the story-teller's throne, as it were. We others sprawled on the desks, the benches, and the floor.

After the few words of protestation against our club's rule of calling on its members in regular order for contributions to its amusement, which protest some one of us had answered, MacGray, taking up the short, bent poker, and eying the old stove steadily for a few moments, sailed into his story, heavily at first, as if the anchors yet dragged, but afterward with all sail set, a smile here for a pennant, and a wave of the poker there, as he saluted some memory in sailing by.

"My last cruise was in the U. S. brig *Surf*. It was the year before I came here, and we sailed from Portsmouth on the 19th October. I remember the day well, — a regular autumn scudder as fierce as this; but we ran to sea in the face of the storm, and knocked about all night in a way to frighten lubbers. There was no use for it. We might better have lain in port twenty-four hours longer, for by that time all was serene again, whilst we had only made a short offing, and had lost a couple of spars. But Captain Spard was a testy old fellow, who was never quiet and always in a hurry. He no doubt took that blow from the southeast as a personal affront, and though orders left it to his discretion when to sail, yet as the little brig was ready, old Spard was particularly irritated at the weather's presumption, and ran out to resent the insult. As I said, he carried away some spars by his want of patience, but what cared he for spars when he was in a rage or a hurry? Spars! why, he didn't care for lives. They say he has hurried, with his threats and curses, many a young one off the yards; and I remember the yarn of how his tearing impatience once caused the death of a young mid, and how, when the red-hot old captain brought his craft in port, the boy's father challenged him. They fought, and burst my topsail if Skyrocket didn't, in his haste and fury, fire before the word. He missed, — good for him, — and the poor mid's father calmly put an half-ounce bullet somewhere in the Captain's thigh. Our brig was a mighty small affair, but she was snug, and her cabin appointments on a fine scale, for she was much used for just what Captain Spard, of all others, detested, — what they call in the navy, government errands. This time we were to bring a United States minister, or consul, and his family, back to his government, from ——.

"After the gale in which we went to sea, we bowled along well enough, always under every inch of canvas that could be bent on. Every piece of wood or metal was kept like an old maid's kitchen, and not a man or boy in that vessel had ever time to fill a pipe or cut a quid, except in his sleep. There was 'Old Fire Unquenchable,' as we had got to call him, always on deck, restless as a caged beast. Back and forth he stamped, the leg with the bullet dragging a little, hurrying officers, hurrying men, eying the sails, peering over the sides, and sometimes really acting as if he meant to jump overboard and help the brig along. The *Surf* was not slow, either. She could make as clear a wake as any craft I have ever sailed in. However, busy above and below decks, and the stanch, little brig always on the drive, we reached the line in a hurry, and without incident. But then, as the sun set on the fifteenth day of our voyage, the wind died down to a calm. Captain Spard had probably looked for this, — dreaded it. At any rate, when a hot moon rolled up, and the faintest puff of air was lost, the old man just ripped out about two yards of oaths, and went below. There he stayed for sixty hours, whilst the first officer whistled in a whisper on the quarter-deck. It must have been as great relief to him as to us to have such a driver drop the reins. I used to wonder in those nearly three days, — when the brig rolled slowly but deeply, when the sails flapped and flapped, when the spars creaked and the chains rattled to every weary rock of the idle craft, when there was no splash of water for'ard nor ripple aft, and sky and sea seemed melting together in some molten liquid, — I used to wonder in real amazement what Captain Spard could be doing in his cabin — was he ill, or chained, or drugged with opium. What could keep him there inactive. I could not conceive of that small, sharp, erect, tightly buttoned flame of a figure, the face all on fire with energy, and the naval cap pulled on just as if he must keep down the fire somehow — I could not conceive nor believe of that man as quiet in a cabin for sixty hours. Yet he was quiet, and from some blabbing officer it was told over and over, until it reached the smallest boy in the forecastle, that when Captain Spard went below, he called to the steward for three toddies. They were brought, and he undressed as he drank them. Then, slipping on a silk cap and long night-dress, he gave orders for a strict watch on deck, and to call him at the first breath of wind, and turned in. They said, too, that he slept the sixty hours without turning over, and when the calm changed in ten or fifteen minutes, from a deathlike stillness to the roaring charge of one of those tropical hurricanes, with only the herald of a small, white, drifting cloud, Captain Spard popped on deck as tightly dressed and fiercely on fire as ever, at the first moment, and had the brig nearly under bare poles — with a closely-reefed fore-topsail, storm stay-sail, and a balance-reefed mainsail set on the ship — when the wind struck her. The *Surf* took it bravely, and rode it out without a scratch. In about a fortnight more we made our port, and on the twentieth of November were at anchor, as trim as a pretty girl, in the harbor of ——. You may bet your buttons that old Spard was a sailor, if he was the crossest, hardest, most unmerciful, hottest-headed sea-serpent that ever cruised the ocean.

"Whilst we are riding at easy anchor in that beautiful bay, the well-built city stretching in a semicircle half a mile from the brig, I will tell you of some two or three others in our vessel beside Captain Spard. There was our first officer, Mr. Breese, who belied his name, and was in everything but seamanship the very opposite of our Captain. He was a young man — not more than twenty-seven, — small, handsome, good-natured, lazy, very popular among the men, and a splendid sailor, — as brave as old Spard, but as calm and easy as the Captain was restless and severe. Nevertheless, the old man respected his first officer, and because of a certain quiet force of the latter, treated him with consideration. The second officer was a Mr. King, a dark, sentimental-looking man of about thirty-five. He was a bachelor, very reserved and haughty. He appeared to be on the most distant terms with his officer messmates, and the men laughed at his foppishness, for he was a regular sea-dandy, always in full toggery. But like many of that kind on sea or land, as I have noticed in my experience knocking about, he was a blooded one. What do I mean by that? Why, plucky as need be, and apt to surprise fellows who presumed on his ballroom appearance.

"Then, among others, was a midshipman, very green, and on his first *float*, but the heartiest, gayest-spirited chap in his mess, with always a side-joke and a pleasant look for the men or boys. He was a good one, and his name was Perry; but we always called him among ourselves, and I don't know why, 'Peaches.'

"Of the crew, A No. 1, was a man who was known as 'Richard the Gentleman.' What his name was on the brig's papers, I never knew. He was a man of thirty years of age, a gentleman by birth and education, who shipped in this way for the spree or adventure of the thing, or for some other reason only known to himself; but he was a gentleman, and not by assumption, but because he could not help it. Easy and free as any of his fellows, he never demeaned himself by forecastle vulgarity or profanity, and he was the best sailor and handsomest man in the *Surf*. We boys found in him a teacher, an example, and a defender. The jolliest companion, and the best hand aloft or on deck, was 'Richard the Gentleman.'

"We had to wait for a week at anchor. Mr. Hodgsdon, the minister, not expecting our arrival so soon, was unable to get his family and property immediately on board. No sooner were we in harbor-order, and the Captain's respects paid to our distinguished to-be passenger, than Old Spard, relapsing from his sailing impatience and excitement, gave orders to his officers, and, fortified by several drinks, turned in comfortably for one of his wonderful sleeps, from which he did not awake until our guests were on board, and sail was to be made for home. Then he suddenly popped on deck, fresh at a word, and buttoned up briskly to crack on all sail, and make us work as few of Uncle Sam's brave defenders had to work. There was no skulking or dallying in the *Surf*. Apoplectic with furious energy, Old Spard sharpened his eyes and his oaths for a run home. Poor old Spard! he carried too much steam in his boiler, unfortunately for him and us, as events soon proved. As the land faded behind us, and the sou'west wind filled every sail tight as a drumhead, we sailors had a view of the honorable ambassador and family, as a bland, portly, gray-haired gentleman stepped from the companion way to light his after-dinner cigar, and convoy a fleet of three ladies on a quarter-deck lounge. Our first officer, too, was with them, bowing and laughing, pointing out the dim line of coast behind, and indicating the course ahead. One of the ladies was stiff, thin, and elderly. She kept very close to the two younger ones, as Mr. Breese made himself agreeable to them, and tried now and then to snub our first officer's easy enjoyment by very cold and measured remarks. You see I was just below them, polishing the aft starboard twelve-pounder, — we carried four of those, and a pivot thirty-two pounder, — and from my place could hear and see well. The old gentleman left the girls to enjoy themselves with our pleasant lieutenant, but the old woman (the girls' aunt, as I soon discovered) seemed to think it her duty to be as much in the way as possible. But Mr. Breese did not seem to mind it, and he would have been a fool indeed had he lowered his colors with two such prizes in company. My eyes, boys, you ought to have seen those girls! I have never before or since seen anything so pretty, They were rosy, and plump, and fresh, and graceful, and so modest and smiling, that I just forgot all about the dear little twelve-pounder as I watched them eagerly listening to Mr. Breese, sometimes laughing, sometimes thoughtful, looking aloft or over the sea, and making gestures with little dimpled hands as graceful as the dives of baby porpoises. The one I supposed the youngest — she was not as large as her sister, and had longer black lashes and a rosier mouth — called the other ‘Rose,’ and Rose called her ‘Bertie,’ — Rose and Bertie Hodgson. Well, from that time I used often to see them on deck, sometimes escorted by Mr. Breese, and sometimes by Mr. King; and do you know that in a week's time I believed that both those gentlemen were in love with the minister's daughters. I believe Captain Spard thought so too, for, though he never came within ten yards of the ladies, he began to eye them angrily from wherever he paced the decks, and to speak quicker to the officers, and to watch the sky and barometer, as if he wanted a storm to drive the petticoats below decks. It was evidently riling the old man that any one on board the brig was enjoying himself — that any one had time to speak to a woman, when every thought should be given to pushing the ship. He would constantly call out to any officer who happened to be with the Miss Hodgsons, and order him to do this or that which was entirely unnecessary. The fact was, that the presence of those two beautiful girls did interfere with the brig's discipline. Often have I seen men loitering aloft, as they lay out on the foot-ropes reefing or mending, watching the pretty pictures on deck rather than the work at hand; and, never mind what was doing, if the young ladies were above decks, the men were constantly stealing glances at them. Our favorite midshipman, 'Peaches,' I often saw now, sighing and taking dejected attitudes, as he held by the shrouds and divided his attention between sad glances at the waves and anxious looks to where the pretty sisters sat or stood. The beautiful girls were enchanters indeed, I felt sure, when I caught 'Richard the Gentleman' swelling out his chest and eying jealously, or at least enviously, his officer, Mr. King. And what else do you suppose our model sailor was led to do? Why, one evening, just after six bells, when we were barely moving on the water, so light was the wind, Miss Bertie Hodgson, who was standing alone aft, and not far from the wheel, dropped over the side her little straw hat which she had held by a string from her finger. As it fluttered to the water, she gave a slight scream. Richard, who happened to be for'ard making fast a halliard or tricing-line, had seen the loss and heard the pitiful little cry. I don't know where our Captain was at that moment, but Mr. Breese was going towards Miss Bertie, and he was in charge of the deck. At any rate, Richard dropped his work, and went over the side in a jiffy. He swam astern, picked up the hat, and returned to beneath the for'ard starboard port-hole, from which Mr. Breese had ordered the men to throw him a line. Climbing lightly on board, and shaking off the water, he touched his cap to his officer, who advanced before Miss Hodgson to take the wet straw hat, and passed him to hand it himself with a bow to the young lady, who fully rewarded him with a beaming smile and the warmly spoken words, 'Thank you, thank you, brave sailor; but I am so sorry you should have taken so much trouble and danger just to save my hat.' Mr. Breese, because of his love for Miss Bertie — and it was evident it was the younger sister who had conquered him — had to keep the affair quiet, but I verily believe that had it met old Spard's eyes or ears, 'Richard the Gentleman' would have been triced up for a flogging.

"After a week or ten days, there came a succession of gales from the north and northeast, that greatly hindered our voyage, and proportionally enraged Captain Spard, and his way of doing seemed bound to prove the truth of 'more haste less speed;' for he would never bate a stitch of canvas until the bending yards threatened to snap. I remember that one day, in one of the squalls of that stormy week, I saw the fore-yard bending like a hickory, and was expecting every moment to see something go, when Mr. Breese stepped up to the Captain and remonstrated with him for his recklessness, suggesting that some of the lighter sails should be taken in; but the old man turned upon him as if he would have struck him, and with an oath, ordered him to go about his business. Hardly a minute passed before we heard a loud report, and with a whiz the foretop-sail flew out of the bolt-ropes, and vanished in the gale. Then of course the helm had to be put up quickly, the bare yard lowered, and the rags clewed up. Every day the Captain grew uglier, fiercer, and more impatient. The men led dog's lives, and the officers fared harshly, until we began to say 'The Captain is mad,' little suspecting how soon it should be proved so. The rough weather blew itself out, and we ran, with but few scars left, into easy sailing, with fair winds and sparkling seas. The ladies and our ambassador got about again, the love-making recommenced, and everything but the Captain was as comfortable as could be wished, when something occurred which was the forerunner of greater misfortune. We were twenty days out, and bowling along for our home port as nicely as ever brig did, with an easy sea and clear sky, when, one morning, having edged my work near to my favorite position — by one of the after guns — for seeing and hearing the interesting love-play on the deck where our honorable passengers lived, I heard Miss Rose Hodgson — Bertie and the aunt had not come up yet, and Miss Rose had seemed unusually delighted to meet Mr. King, — I heard Miss Rose say, after some other conversation much more tender and interesting, 'But, Mr. King, where is your respected old *Mercury?* I have not seen his fiery face, or even heard his angry voice, since early last evening.' 'Captain Spard? Did you not hear that he was taken sick yesterday? but I expected to see him up this morning. He complained of headache and some fever.' Miss Rose laughed, and made some joke or other about the fever being chronic, and that our Captain ought to be a steamer's engineer, rather than what he was; but I only caught it indistinctly, and had then to move away with my swab, for the boatswain was moving that way. At about two bells that afternoon, there was very little wind — only enough to save us from a calm — and the ship was very quiet; a few men for'ard mending sail, and a few midship scraping and painting. 'Richard the Gentleman' was on watch in the foretop, and Miss Rose sat in the shadow of a sail aft, reading, whilst her father was snoring on a mattress. I was loafing behind a gun, and watching Miss Rose's beautiful face, and also with what a dark and sad lover's glance Mr. King, the officer on watch, was regarding her from his short, quarter-deck walk, when suddenly a figure, which I did not immediately recognize, appeared on the deck, out of sight of Lieutenant King just then, as his walk took him beyond the sail, but directly in front, and not more than twenty feet from Miss Hodgson, who had not yet raised her eyes from her book to discover the apparition — for so it seemed, in the suddenness and fearful grotesqueness of its appearance. It was Captain Spard, a large white towel tied about his head, a full, long dressing-gown, very ragged, hanging to below his knees, and below that were the white drawers tied above his bare feet and ankles. His face was fiery red, and swollen, and his eyes seemed ablaze. He stood only a second thus, his eyes fixed in frenzy on Miss Hodgson, and then, as he advanced a few steps very slowly and noiselessly with his hands extended, as if to seize her, she seemed still unconscious of his presence. But of a sudden her eyes rose to his as we all heard the cry come clearly from 'Richard the Gentleman' from his post for'ard and aloft, — 'Mr. King — look out — quick!' and as Mr. King sprang forward to Miss Rose's side, the Captain rushed for her with the words, 'You hag — you hag — I'll strangle you!' but the lieutenant stepped before the dreadfully frightened girl, and said with a terrible expression, 'Not another step, at your peril.' As quickly as the words were spoken, the Captain raised his arm over his head, ready to strike, as if he had a cutlass in hand — and — fell back senseless on the deck. He was mad — crazy as a loon. Four men, by Mr. King's order, carried him to his state-room. In two days more, we heard that the Captain was getting all right again; that he had gone, according to the surgeon's report, into a temporary delirium, because of a fever which was now leaving him, and that he would be well and on deck again in a few days.

And so he was. In a week's time Captain Spard was on deck again, as natural in looks, oaths, and impatience, as ever. We were approaching the Florida Reefs, and the old man was always on deck, leaving nothing to his officers, and sparing no canvas. There were calms and baffling winds, and occasional squalls. The currents, too, 'Richard the Gentleman' told us, were drifting us hither and thither, until we might enter the Gulf Stream. And the cruise was long, and all the obstacles were worrying old Spard to death, while passengers, officers, and men grew impatient, fearing they might not reach port by Christmas, or even by New Year's Day. There were four days nearly before the twenty-fifth; with a spanking breeze from any quarter not north, northeast, or northwest, we might run into Portsmouth by Christmas Day. The old-maid aunt sympathized with the Captain's restlessness; the ambassador watched the weather as he might have studied the countenances of a cabinet; the young ladies and officers discussed the chances of blazing wood-fires and merry dances in the holidays, and the crew began to whistle for a fair wind, and swear because it came not.

"On the afternoon of the twenty-second the wind came out strong and fair from the sou'west by south, and if there was ever a rejoicing crew it was that of the *Surf*. It held, and was stronger on the twenty-third. We were as earnest as our old man now for studding-sails, gaff-top-sails, and flying jib, but they had to be taken in before four bells that afternoon. We had not gotten a good observation in three days, the sky had been so misty or cloudy, but that caused no uneasiness. 'Old Spard knew what he was about.' The morning of the twenty-fourth of December came, the wind about the same, and the sky no clearer. Old Spard for two days and two nights now had not left the deck, and yet, as were were getting along so finely, why must he be always there, pacing so quickly and unhaltingly, looking so unquiet, muttering his oaths? I heard 'Peaches' say, with a laugh, that he would bet *some one* was going mad again, but I guess no one else thought so, and I doubt if 'Peaches' himself did. The ladies were merry enough, and in every chance for a chat, the first and second officers seemed more devoted than ever. About noon that day, as I heard afterwards, Mr. Breese asked the Captain if our course was not too westerly; that, if the wind should freshen to a gale, would we have offing enough, should the wind come out fierce to the eastward, as it is like to do at this season, after a southerly hold? and he added, too, that we did not know our position. 'Don't we?' replied the Captain, testily, and with a sneer, stopping at the same time in his march — 'don't we? I beg your pardon, Mr. Breese, *I* do to a fathom, and we shall be *ashore* soon, so don't trouble yourself. I command here at present.' A strange answer, and strangely given — why the Captain's displeasure? According to Mr. Breese's calculation, we were off the Florida coast, rather close too, and could not reach port and be ashore, even if the wind held as it was, in less than two days. However, he had had no observation, and the Captain must surely be right. At any rate, he must obey — not meddle.

"The afternoon wore on, the wind yet fresh and fair, blowing nearly half a gale. As the sun went down, clouds came out of the north and nor'west in broken rifts, that promised a storm for the morrow. The moon rose soon after, and by the time she had climbed an hour high, the clouds that had then spread in patches over most of the sky, obscured her face from minute to minute, and were shadowed on the sea and on our decks. At the change of watch, 'Richard the Gentleman' took his turn at the wheel, and our passengers, who had been enjoying the early night on deck, went below. Except the watch and our Captain, there was no one above deck. Old Spard continued his tigerish prowl up and down, like a caged beast, every now and then approaching the helmsman to peer at the compass' face by the binnacle, and see that the course he had ordered was exactly held to. Soon his walk confined itself to short, quick turns, close to the helmsman. Half an hour perhaps from the change of watch, the startling cry came from the foretop, 'Breakers ahead!' 'Where away?' was the response. 'On the starboard quarter!' 'Come down from there, you lubber,' yelled our Captain in a rage that was boiling; 'send a man aloft, Simmons, who can see and not lie.' Now, that fitful, uncertain light of a quarter moon, through scudding clouds, and on a chopping sea, is very bewildering, and we on deck could see no breakers, nor could we hear the sound of them. But the wind was not from the west, as you know, and the clouds were driving against our surface wind. By the time the fresh man was at his post aloft, Mr. King and the passengers in the cabin, who had heard the Captain's loud words, had hurried to the deck, the young ladies much frightened, I suppose. In a moment the cry came again, 'Breakers ahead!' and Old Spard, with a jump of rage, shouted, 'You lie.' A quick, earnest conversation, that I could not make out, but in which I heard the voice of Mr. King and some oaths of the Captain, was broken by the sudden, and this time urgent call of the watch again,—'Breakers—breakers—on the starboard quarter!' and in the momentary silence succeeding, we now heard clearly the roar. I looked of course to the quarter indicated, and then back in a second to the group aft. Old Spard had a pistol in each hand! One was pointed at 'Richard the Gentleman,' and as the Captain stood motionless for once, not a sound coming on the instant from the amazed group before him, I heard the mad words from Old Spard, 'Alter your course half a point, and you are a dead man!' How long things remained in that condition I can't say—perhaps not a minute, but it seemed an hour before Mr. Breese came running from somewhere, and as Mr.

King shouted some order, I saw Richard swinging the wheel around with a rush. A flash and a report! The wheel was its own master. Mr. King jumped and seized it as the dying man's hands slid off. Spard's other pistol covered him; but as it fell to its aim, Miss Rose Hodgson threw herself with a shriek directly before our mad Captain. It all passed in a flash. There, as the brave girl rushed between her lover and the murderous maniac, Mr. King with all his strength was striving to carry out the heroism of 'Richard the Gentleman' and turn the brig from destruction, whilst Mr. Breese charged fiercely on his Captain, to tear the weapon from his grasp. But as quickly as the movement of Miss Rose, the whole scene changed. The fierceness of crazy old Spard changed to a delirium of fear. His raised arm dropped, the pistol fell to the deck and exploded. Then, rushing from the beautiful girl with the horrible cry, — 'You cursed hag! but you have not got me yet!' — he leaped over the bulwarks into the sea. In this time of extreme peril to the brig, it was impossible to think of saving the madman who had caused our danger, and when, by the coolness and skill of our officers, our vessel was placed in comparative security, the last spark of fire in Old Spard must have been quenched in the ocean. When the wind fell and the sky cleared at midnight, noble 'Richard the Gentleman' was breathing his last. At his home and ours, and over every Christian land, bells were pealing with gladdest rejoicing. Poor Richard! while we, turned from our danger, were, as Christmas came in, set on a safe course with thankful hearts.

"I wonder where 'Peaches' is now, — 'Peaches,' who kept choking down sobs all that Christmas Day. Pooh! he was too tender-hearted for a sailor.

"Breese commands a frigate now, and both he and Mr. King are married men. I thought it would be so when we ran into Portsmouth a few days after."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "ONCE UPON A TIME CLUB."—CHARLEY BALCH'S WRITTEN STORY FROM THE PRESERVED MANUSCRIPTS.

THROUGH the winter our Club met in-doors, and I do not think we got as good entertainment as we had in the nights of space and fresh air. Sometimes we were forced to introduce debates and games of chess and backgammon. Hazelteen's story, Rough's and MacGray's, I have written up as well as I can from memory, but Grant's and my own and those of new members that filled up some other of the winter's evenings, I shall not repeat, principally because they are not worth it. In our regular Club meetings we got nothing out of Charley Balch. He persisted in refusing until, in a meeting to consider and act upon his insubordination we passed resolutions of censure, and condemned him to *write* a story—a long one—to be finished before May and to be read aloud at the first resumption of our out-door meetings. And so when summer nearly approached us again—the last term of we old boys of the "Once Upon a Time Club"—we came to the time for Charley's story, and it was ready, Charley said.

"Let us have it out on the roof too," he added; "I have written it all but I can tell it off word for word without the paper and I would rather have it there where we always seem to be so much to ourselves." So after bed hour, one soft warm night we, the original members of the popular club, gathered once more — it was our last meeting, though we knew it not then, before the big school of the world should scatter us to places and interests far separated. Evening had yielded

> "The world to Night . . . . loose arrayed in dun,
> . . . . faint, erroneous rays,
> Glanced from the imperfect surfaces of things,
> Flung half an image on the straining eye;
> While wavering woods, and villages, and streams,
> And rocks, and mountain tops, that long retained
> The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene;
> Uncertain if beheld."

And in the glowing clearness of soft starlight, Charley recited his story of

HOW THE CAPTAIN CAME BY A LEGACY.

The Captain — my uncle, who fought his last battle, that with Death, a few years ago and was defeated, as thousands of greater soldiers than he have been — told me many strange stories. His life was a volume of adventures, and I believe, knowing his character well, that he never drew a long bow, nor let his imagination color that which he pictured. He was a bachelor, a chivalric old gentleman, and our favorite uncle. He was born a soldier, but his father, with an old-fashioned prejudice against West Point, would not allow him to profit by its education, so he had to gratify his military spirit by an apprenticeship to fighting in the Indian wars; and afterwards he commanded a volunteer company in the Mexican War. At Resaca de la Palma, in a moment and position of great peril, the Captain turned to encourage his men, and having his side-face to the enemy, a Mexican bullet entered one check and made its exit by the other. The good soldier, open-mouthed, was shouting some command at the moment, so it happened that the ball made its journey without touching a tooth, though it ploughed a furrow in my uncle's tongue. In consequence of that wound, the Captain ever after nipped his words in a fashion which always reminded me of a button-hole scissors; and he got the habit, probably from feeling the two punctures in his cheeks as they healed, of holding a hand to his chin, the thumb on one scar, the first finger on the opposite. When much interested, listening or talking, he always did this. In his Indian days the small pox once got hold of him and marked his face in the most orderly manner, so that Brother Hugh said, with one of his many witty similes, that Uncle Captain (so we all called him) looked as if he had sat down on his face in a cane-bottomed chair. Nevertheless, my dear Uncle Captain was a very handsome man, of medium height, muscular figure, fine shoulders, erect as Mars, — his head always held as if anxious to catch the first note of a charge, his nose the Roman type, his chin strong and finely chiseled, a rugged, overhanging brow, beneath which the somewhat small brown eyes sparkled with bright fire and feeling; and to complete the picture of our Bayard, you must fancy the iron-gray hair, and his virile moustache, clipped *à la militaire.* Only a small proportion of his stories were warlike, and those were of others' prowess, not of his own. The one I am about to recall was of his boyhood, before he had tasted the romance of tent and field, and I have tried to draw his portrait, because I want you to see, as well as hear him tell how he came by a Legacy. He told it one autumn evening, before the lamps were lighted, — mother and father, an artist guest, Hugh, Sister Maggie, and I, sitting in the dining-hall before the big, open wood fire-place. My Uncle Captain, astride of a camp-stool that had once been the property of Santa Anna, just as if he was mounted on horseback, his left hand often feeling the scars in his cheeks, — an aid to memory, perhaps, — and the right hand motioning with an empty brier-wood pipe, which was at times laid on the stool between his legs. The captain's only audience, apparently, was a flame-y top-log of hickory, which seemed to enjoy its glow in the speaker's face, and to be proud of its skill in varying and warming the shades and outlines of his figure and features.

"It really seems but two or three months ago when you and I, Lydia," — that was his sister, my mother, who was resting on a lounge near him, — "and Donald were children together in Kentucky, just as your young ones, George, Maggie, and Hugh are children here. Your youngsters have never heard about the Rich Dwarf; how their mother, and their Uncle Donald, and I, knew that mysterious man, who left me an acre of land which has made me rich. Well, — and now, Lydia you set me right, if I oblique in my march on ground tramped many long years ago, — I was about fifteen years of age, Donald between twelve and thirteen, — he died at eighteen, the year that Gray Fox, the bloody Comanche, nearly scalped me in the Prairie-rouge fight, — and Sister Lydia ten; and Lydia, it was only because of your prettiness that we ever came to be friends of a man whom no one else knew except by sight and false reports. However, we went to G—— County, because father took us there one summer for mother's health, and there we continued for nearly three years. We lived in the oldest and finest house in the village of Altonborough," — I must, for very good reasons, change the real names that my Uncle Captain gave. "Was it not a wild, pleasant, out-of-the-way village, Lydia? Do you remember the great oaks standing without any order in the one broad, grassy street, — the four-horse stage-coach that swung up to the Buck Hotel every Tuesday and Friday at three in the afternoon, — the great field back of the gray church, where the turkey-shoots used to come off,

— the little niggers swinging on every gate, the big niggers whistling, lounging, or laughing by every big tree, — the rows of saddle-horses with long curbs and heavy saddles, that were always pawing and neighing at the hitching bars — a hitching bar for every house — at all hours of the day, — the groups of tall, hairy backwoodmed lounging in their hunting-shirts and leather leggings on the piazza of the Buck, — and, finest memory of all, our low, brown, capacious house, with the hundreds-of-years old oak resting one of its biggest, crookedest branches, like an elbow, on the roof, to steady its repose? Yes; your mother remembers it all as well as you, Maggie, and the boys will recall forty years even from this, every corner and moulding of this dining-hall.

"One of the most frequent and curious subjects of talk in Altonborough was the 'Rich Dwarf.' Grown people and children had their stories and fancies about him of whom no one knew much. The loafers at the Buck had fables of his feats as horseman and hunter. Some said his riches came from a gold mine under his house. Others said he was a madman. The black maumas frightened their children with stories of his power to stop the growth of any boy or girl, and to change crying babies into wild-cats. And now I will tell you exactly what facts were known about a character so mysterious. The Rich Dwarf was the only son of a distinguished French nobleman, who joined our cause during the Revolution, and commanded a regiment through the last years of that war. He was a very gallant soldier, an elegant gentleman of large wealth, and a very eccentric man. The son's, *i. e.*, the Dwarf's, real name was Surenne d'Auvergne. In France, his title after his father's death would have been Marquis — Marquis Surenne d'Auvergne. His mother died at the time of his birth. His father died when his son was twenty-one; their home then was in New Orleans. The Rich Dwarf left New Orleans after his father's death, and with a large inherited land claim, entered the property, to the amount of four miles square, near Altonborough, in Kentucky. There he built a stone residence, — not a house, not a castle, — but an extensive and a strange, wild piece of architecture, well suited to its situation. No one in Altonborough, at the time we moved there, had ever crossed the threshold of the Rich Dwarf's home, and but very few had ever put foot within the four mile square of his domain. The estate covered a tract of forest land about which the Black River" (a name I substitute for the one my Uncle Captain gave) "made a great bend, inclosing the property on three sides; on the fourth side (the west) was a rough mountain, or hill, which ended precipitously at each end in a rocky backbone, to resume its mountainous course again from both extremities, after crossing the river. It was as if a monstrous snake had made the two crossings of the river under water, and reared a counter coil on the intervening land.

The river, very swift in its currents, and bordered along that inclosed point by thick hummocks and swamps, made on the three sides a sufficient defense from trespass and intrusion. On the mountain side the Rich Dwarf had cut off the timber for a breadth along the ridge, and made with it an impassable *chevaux de frise*, like a tremendously strong and high Virginia rail fence, the great branches projecting one way and the other, as the trees were felled. That impenetrable wall of trees reached from Black River to Black River again. So did the Rich Dwarf shut himself and his possessions of home, game, and plantation (there was but little of the last) off from the world. At a narrow piece of the river he had thrown over a draw-bridge, or rather swing-bridge, like the postern-bridge of feudal days, on which he himself might cross and recross. By that bridge, on his side of the river, stood a lodge, or guard-house. There was another at the extreme last point of the estate, a third by the north end of his west line, and a fourth on the mountain side, in the centre of its range, from river to river. Each was occupied by a huntsman, or guard, — a Frenchman, a bachelor, a taciturn, cross, unpumpable old fellow in each case, that no trespasser, or curious one could approach, evade or beguile. When the Rich Dwarf went outside of his place, it was in a coach, — a vehicle, otherwise than in the shape of a stage-coach, unknown in those days in that part of the country. A black man drove the coach; an immense dog followed it; and no more of the Rich Dwarf than his face was seen by gazers on the roads, and in the village. One more fact was known of the Rich Dwarf: A reckless Kentuckian, of high social position, had once penetrated the Rich Dwarf's estates, and had, notwithstanding the threats of the guards, persevered in hunting there. Finally, when two of the guards swore they would shoot him if he did not turn back to his boat on the river bank, he retreated, but not until he had sent a most profane and insulting message to the Rich Dwarf. The next day the intruder was challenged, the bearer of the message being a foreigner, who had never before been seen in Altonborough or the State, and who was never again seen after the duel's termination. The challenged party chose pistols at six paces. Only the seconds and a surgeon witnessed the fight. The Kentuckian fired first, and then the Dwarf shot him through the heart. That event made for the Dwarf a respect that was somewhat colored with admiration. As I have said, so much was true in the stories told of the Rich Dwarf; but to us children, who heard and believed the legends of Altonborough, no character of the 'Arabian Nights' was more marvelous in interest and prowess than the Rich Dwarf, and so it continued until eleven months after our coming to Kentucky. In that time we had never once had a glimpse of our mysterious hero; but in our strolls a little back from the village, we had beheld, as we might have gazed on an enchanted castle, through the distant woods, and against the background of the mountain, pieces and lines of the 'Dwarf's castle,'—for that was what we called it,—and indeed his stone house looked, as we saw it, like the castles we imagined.

"But one day—it was in the spring—don't you clearly remember it, sister?—we three, Donald, Lydia, and I, were just out of the village on the roadside, strolling aimlessly along in play and talk, when our attention was attracted by an enormous, fawn-colored dog, some kind of a hound, the largest I have ever seen, that was galloping, tongue out, on the road. 'The Dwarf's dog, I'll bet,' said Donald. 'Yes, look, there comes his carriage, isn't it?' And there, as we turned to look, approached, on a quick trot, a large, splendid pair of rough-haired black horses, drawing a handsome coach. A tall, gray-wooled negro was driving with much style. On they came, the dust rising grandly. Elated by such a fine sight on our village road, Donald and I shouted 'Hurrah!' as the equipage drew near; and what did sister do—shocked at our rudeness—but clap her hands over Donald's mouth! And so she stood, her cheeks rosy with exercise and excitement, her flat straw hat blown back on her long brown hair, which waved, with the hat-ribbons, nearly to her waist, and her face and attitude full of grace, playfulness, and determination, as she struggled to prevent Donald from shouting again. At that moment — the carriage was about ten yards from us — a man's head was thrust from the window, and, with a laughing expression of pleasure, the Dwarf earnestly regarded our group. Before the carriage had passed us, its master shouted quickly to the coachman, 'Belzar, halt!' and in a second the fine horses were pulled back on their heavily-levered bits. Lifting his hat, — a sort of shako of fine black fur, with a tassel falling from the top, — he said, in the pleasantest manner imaginable, 'A good day to you, my beautiful little girl, and to your brothers, too;' to which we replied suitably; and then he continued to gaze at us fixedly, but with an abstracted expression of countenance, for many minutes, and I suppose we watched him, too, with eager curiosity, connecting the tales we had heard of the Rich Dwarf with what we saw of him, — only his head: a large, handsome head, with short, curly, black hair; a broad brow, and the face narrowing considerably at the mouth and chin; the complexion a dark, clear olive; eyebrows much curved; dark brown eyes, as beautiful and tender as the gentlest woman's, yet restless and piercing as the falcon's at times, and often twinkling with fun. I did not see all this at the time we first met him, but I describe now what I found in his face when I knew it well. I never have seen a face more full of contradictions: firm, yet weak; martial, affectionate, sensitive, and flashed with wild humor, it changed like a kaleidoscope. A moustache, several shades lighter than his hair, narrow, bushy, and trimmed short, save at the ends, where it curved up a little and lengthened in silky points, gave a picturesque and almost weird force to the whole countenance.

"The situation was suddenly changed by sister, who, stepping timidly to the carriage side, lifted up to its occupant a little bouquet of spring wild flowers, which she had gathered in our morning's stroll. He caught her hand in both of his, and leaned his head from the carriage window to kiss sister's hand over and over again, and I wish you could have seen the thankfulness and happiness which his face expressed. I think there were tears in his eyes as he released her hand, and said, 'Children, animals, and birds.' Then, after a pause, he asked, 'Whose children are you, and where do you live? you must come and see me — will you?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'if mother will allow us to. I will go now and ask.' Again he looked at us for several moments without a word, and then said with a sigh, and as if he were speaking to himself, 'A soldier — a loving mother — ah! manhood unreached! . . . . Belzar, turn!' The great dog, who had come back to the carriage when it was stopped, and had stood watching his master as intently as we had, now gave a loud, sharp bark of one note, as the coachman turned his horses and drove back to the village. Those last expressions of the Dwarf, as his eyes gazed searchingly on each of us in turn, impressed me as very strange; and I remembered them. It would seem now as if he spoke prophetically: I to become a soldier; sister what she is now, as you children can devoutly attest; and Donald to die before manhood. However, be that as it may, our adventure proved of great moment to us, for our mother had received Mr. Surenne d'Auvergne very graciously, and promised that we children should visit him.

"The call of the Dwarf made a great excitement. When he came out from our house a crowd of white and colored people were gathered about the gate, to peer with vulgar curiosity at him. The hound growled ominously, and showed his big tusks, as if he longed to scatter the vulgar crowd; but his master said aloud, 'No matter, Cartouche; they have more of the brute in them than you: go on.' Before this, the inhabitants of Altonborough had never seen more of the Rich Dwarf than his head through the carriage windows; or at rare times, when he passed near the village on horseback, his diminutive figure then, when splendidly mounted on his light-framed blooded horse, and sitting with perfect skill, appearing very far from contemptible. Extreme sensitiveness to his misfortune had imbittered his life, and driven him to his seclusion; and he studied in every way to escape the curiosity of the vulgar. My mother was much pleased with his praises of her children, and impressed by the fine, and even dignified manners of one whom she had heard of as some evil monstrosity. She repeated to us, when we returned, their conversation, and told us that though the top of his head was just on a level with the mantel slab, — three feet ten inches from the floor, — yet his figure was good.

"About a week after that, one morning, as we rose from breakfast, the Rich Dwarf's mettlesome black horses drew up at our door. This time a dark mulatto boy, dressed in close-fitting blue, with steel buttons and bands, sat beside the dignified black coachman. The driving purchase was hardly slackened in the horses' mouths, before he sprang, with the lightness of a monkey, from the high seat, and pranced in miniature style of a French dancing-master to our door-bell, the ivory showing wide in the pleasure he could not control, but otherwise assuming — self-important young nigger — the airs of an ambassador extraordinary. Our respectable old house-woman — black too; all the servants there were negroes — answered the tremendous jingling of the bell, on which the small ebony Mercury from Dwarf-land seemed to play a martial break-down. When she opened to him, he tossed back his head, and indifferent to the woman's years, size, or dignity, addressed her, — 'Hi, gal: you waits on dis 'ouse, eh?' Of course there was no reply from our astonished and insulted Peggy. 'You does: wal, jis you 'and dat letter to your missus — you har.' And with that, he would have walked into the hall-way, but Peggy could stand it no longer. Catching him by the braided collar, she gave him a push and a swing that put him out of the door, and left him spinning, like a black top, on the carriage-stone. 'You black piccaninny debbil, I learns you p'liteness: wait dar, monkey!' She slammed the door on him, ejaculating all through the hall, —'Pshaw — fur dat wee debbil to cuss me like plantation han'. Lor! I'se big mine to jis trow 'im on my knee, an' paddle 'is behine.'

"The missive was a short, polite note, asking my mother to allow her children to spend the day with Mr. Surenne d'Auvergne, at Terre Sauvage (the name of his estate); that his carriage would convey them, and return them in safety. We were soon properly dressed, and seated in the comfortable carriage. The impish black boy had subsided after his discomfiture by Peggy, and now shut the door quietly enough when we were inside, and climbed with agility to his perch beside the large, grave coachman, who had on our appearance from the house, raised the whip to his hat, in respectful salute. The country as far as the Black River crossing to Terre Sauvage — five miles, was well known to us, so it awakened not our interest. We were very quiet, anticipating the day's adventure. We were driven at a very fast rate, and said but little to one another. So we arrived at" —

"You forget," interrupted my mother, "the funny conduct of our little black footman outside."

"O, yes," said my Uncle Captain, with a smile; "little nigger, at short intervals of our drive, let out the most peculiar peals of laughter, and partly suppressed screams, like the calls of a screech-owl, or the wauling of a moon-struck tom-cat, and each time his fun or misery, or whatever caused the remarkable sounds, was cut short by the deep, peremptory voice of the old coachman, 'Broke dat, Mezzo!' 'Chaw dat short, you raben!' 'Shu' up quick, or I 'bleege to lick you!' 'Mezzo, you yearde me, — do him 'gain, an' I drap you und' de hosses.' However, as I was saying, we arrived at the river, where the bridge, after we had waited a minute or two, swung down in place, and we rattled across into the kingdom of the Rich Dwarf, at the entrance to which was a rough stone cottage, whose occupant, the bridge tender, stood by its porch, and touched his hat as we passed, — a grim, stern old chap, who looked like a veteran soldier. Here we were in a beautiful forest, through which the road (drier and smoother than our village street) wound picturesquely. When perhaps half a mile in the estate, we heard a furious galloping of feet, and looking through the vista of great trees, we beheld a horse and rider approaching at speed. It must be our host, the Dwarf, though he was too distant yet to be recognized. He was riding at such a tremenduous rate that the noise startled our horses, so that the coachman, I thought, had some difficulty to restrain them. 'Whoa! whoa!' I heard him say several times, and then, 'Massa —

hi — for sure!' Yes, it was the Dwarf coming. A fallen tree lay in his track, the great trunk making a wall six feet high and six feet broad, whilst a main branch stretching from its now upper side, separated from it not more than five feet at the widest part. Over the trunk, and through the gap, leaped horse and rider, without stop or jolt, and on they came at the same speed, not diminishing it in any degree, until the horse (when it seemed the next stride would bring his legs through the carriage window) drew up in a flash on his haunches, and the rider, not as much discomfited as the horse, raised his hat, saying, with a laugh, 'The best of fortune, I declare, to see you. A right good happy morning, children.' Had he *stood* by us and called us, all so much larger than he, *children*, I think I should have laughed; but as he looked on horseback, and in the remembrance of the leap and the halt, it seemed perfectly proper, — as it was, at any rate, for I, the oldest, was, as I have told you, only a little more than fifteen. whilst the Rich Dwarf was a man of thirty-two. But what a fairy-book picture it was to ride in a rich coach through that venerable wood, and have at our carriage side that slender, foam-flecked, cord-veined, glossy horse, throwing his head in pride and impatience, arching his neck with grace to the hand of his master, carrying the wavy tail like a splendid plume, and in every motion proudly showing a great, fiery spirit, and a mettle which never knew exhaustion

"The best of fortune, I declare, to see you." Page 244.

or fear, whilst the dwarf sat him as a gull rides the storm. The horseman wore yellow buckskin top-boots, and fierce silver spurs. His breeches and short loose sack were of black velvet. His vest was scarlet, the collar covered partly under the coat by a lace neck-collar, such as we have seen in the pictures of cavaliers. On his head he wore the tasseled black shako we had seen when we had met him first. He held his splendid steed by the lightest rein, and his seat was the easiest, the most graceful, and the closest that I have ever seen. It seemed the Dwarf's home and throne; as if there he felt not his diminutiveness: as if it strengthened him, made him happy, carried him over the gulf that a diseased sensitiveness had rolled between his fellow-men and him. We noticed afterward, when we saw him in the house, what we had not observed when we had seen him in his carriage, — the disproportion between his head and body, the former being of the size of a large man's, whilst the latter, though well-turned and muscular, only lifted the fine head to the height of a child's of six years of age; nor did we see it as he rode beside us, though perhaps it caught our observation when the brilliancy of his riding had ceased to be a novelty, if it ever ceased to be that. Before we reached the castle — for I must call it *castle* — his horse became frightfully restive, plunging madly every few steps, with a snort like an angry buck's, and rearing — do you remember, sister, how you leaned back in the coach and covered your eyes with your hands? — rearing to fall back with every lift, had not the Dwarf, when the animal each time seemed about to topple over, jerked his head around by a catch on one rein near the bit, and thus, destroying his balance, forced him to regain it by coming down again. But the dwarf was cool and enjoying. He spoke to his horse playfully and soothingly, while he looked laughingly at our excitement.

"Arrived at the castle, we seemed transported to the times and scenes of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, sovereign of Bagdad. When we had descended from the coach, and the Dwarf had released his steed to gallop off with a wild neigh to his stable, the great hound sprang out to greet his master, the dog's head on a level with the Dwarf's, and the hall-doors rolled back at the push of our quondam footman, now transformed, by his master's presence, into the most quiet, humble, and respectful of pages. I wished Peggy might behold the change. Within, everything was luxurious. A wide, rich hall, with carved wood pillars, splendid pictures, bronze figures, tropical flowers, and a floor of red and blue wrought tiles. We felt the sensation of awe, of enchantment, as if the fragrant perfumes might turn to wreathed smoke; pillars, walls, and pictures, melt away; and the Dwarf and the hound change to herons, and fly off above us, — we to be left standing on a desert, or sea-shore. But no: there stood our host, gallantly holding the hand of her whom he called his

"Do what you please, exactly as you fancy, and let me be a child, too." Page 247.

beautiful little fairy, and bidding us most pleasantly to make ourselves happy and at home. 'It is my home for a few years, but yours, Fairy Lydia, and your brothers', whilst you will stay here; do what you please, exactly as you fancy, and let me be a child too. We must have some fine times: why, you have lighted the hall up as I never saw it before. Ah! youth, youth, youth, how glorious thou art! Now remember, *here* I am no Monsieur d'Auvergne: but let 's say, "Al Surenne." And your names, what are they? Philip — and Lydia — and Donald. May this wish be a command, Fairy Lydia?' And sister, with the tact, and a pretty, modest conformity to circumstances, which she possessed even when a child, — now, don't say 'Nonsense,' sister, because you will not deny, at any rate, that you immediately answered, with possession, 'It is a pleasure, *Al Surenne*.' 'Charming,' exclaimed the Dwarf, much pleased, 'and now push into every room and corner, — do whatever you please with whatever you find, whilst I change my dress. Come, Cartouche. Au revoir, young friends,' and he ran up-stairs like a boy, Cartouche beside him.

"It was about noon, then, and our host did not appear again until two. We wandered about the many rooms, entirely interested and absorbed in all we saw; but not a soul did we meet, not a voice did we hear. There was a library, — what a delightful room, — the book-cases, carved in hundreds of quaint devices, reached only about five feet high, filled with big books and little books, books in elegant bindings, and books without any binding at all. Above these book-shelves, around the entire top length of which there was carved a great boa-constrictor, were very many pictures, engravings, and paintings, but all of strange, quaint subjects. Over the fire-place was a painting of a noble-looking gentleman in a colonel's uniform of the Revolution. The likeness of the face to the Dwarf's, told us it must be his father. In a walnut rack, which filled an alcove by the window, were guns, rifles, shot and powder-horns, hunting-knives, and game-bags. There was a handsome table littered with books and papers; easy chairs, and a lounge covered with some wonderfully soft and warm-colored texture; and on the floor of polished chestnut were spread furs of the greatest beauty, — of arctic bear, black fox, Bengal tiger, and others. There were bits, and pistols, and pipes on the mantel.

"Then there was a parlor, with a carpet like deep grass in softness, of a pink-white and pale-blue pattern, elegant enough for a queen; with chandeliers that hung heavy with solid richness of gilt workmanship; with such deep, embracing chairs and couches, so warm and soft, that it seemed as if to sink into one would have drowned you in dreams of magnificent ease; with exquisitely cut marble mantels; with statuettes, and easeled paintings of lovely children, and enchanting landscapes; with low, wide windows, that opened on a conservatory of the rarest and sweetest flowers and ferns, and that looked down on a wild bit of the Black River, contrasting with a sunny spread of green fields beyond. And yet the room seemed haunted by loneliness, — as if no one had ever talked or laughed there: as if the flowers shrunk at our gay voices: as if the woof of the carpet begged us, in friendliness, 'Pray, dance on me, young feet;' and the inviting chairs, 'Do let us hold you a while.' But we did not. Sister could not even put her face to the flowers, — could you? and as we hastened from the elegant parlor, an unheard voice seemed calling us to return, and the cold rustle of unseen silks and satins seemed to brush by us, as if they clothed spirits who would press near us for fellowship, even to the doors.

"We never entered that parlor again, in any of our after visits to the castle; and then, when we had left the room, we stood looking in at its magnificence, as one might watch some splendid theatre scene, in ready expectance for the entrance of its dramatic characters. And as we, stilled by its strange influence, peered through one of the great open doors into the surpassing richness and loneliness of the apartment, a deep sigh came from its furthest interior. At the mysterious sound, our hearts halted for a moment, until we saw, stepping down from a curtained passage opposite our position, the Dwarf; and as he walked across to us (stepping as a child might in a gloomy avenue, and glancing once at least over a shoulder), he said, ‘ Ah ! my young guests, a dreary place, somehow, with all its finery.’ How fanciful, almost grotesque, was his appearance now in another dress, of tight buff breeches and buckskin shoes, a cut-away blue silk coat, a buff vest, and lace ruffles on breast and wrists. I wondered then if I was not in a dream, to see that miniature court-dressed figure gliding through that enchanted parlor. But no : he came and stood with us, saying, ‘ I have no mother, nor wife, nor sister ; yet it seems to me as if those who might have been mother, wife, and sister, were often in this room. I can't *see* them, though, — can you ? ’ He asked the last words suddenly and strangely, looking at us as if he would search in our faces for the reflections of those he spoke of. In a moment his manner changed, as we turned from the parlor door. ‘ Fairy Lydia,’ he said, ‘ do folk of your kind ever feel hungry ? those of my sort do. I won't ask Philip and Donald, for we know very well that boys never have an appetite. Cartouche, isn't dinner ready yet ? ’ Cartouche sat in the middle of the hall, with his head on one side, eying his master inquisitively ; but, at this question, he gave one of those dolce niente throat notes, with which some dogs almost *speak* delight or understanding, and trotted off to push open a back hall-door, and disappear.

“ In a few minutes afterward, as we four marched up and down the hall in high fun, we children as much at ease with the Dwarf as if he was of our own age and sort, so great were his social powers, and so boyish and exuberant his spirits and manners at times, Cartouche trotted back again, followed by a stylish-looking servant, — a mulatto, — who bowed, and said, 'Master, dinner is served,' and then, crossing the hall, threw open the doors of the dining-room for us to enter. Another beautiful room, which I shall not describe further than to say that everything of furniture, plate, and silver was very rich and rare: that from one of two marble pillars there sprung a jet of water, which, falling into a shell of stone, made a constant pleasant sound: and that from the other pillar there hung an open cage, in which was a large parrot, gaudily plumaged. The bird rustled delightedly as we entered, and called out, 'Oho, Marquis! oho, Marquis!' and then, after a quavering sort of laugh or chuckle, — 'Welcome to you — welcome to you.' 'There, that will do, Cammanno, handsome fellow,' said Al Surenne, as we took our seats according to the polite indications of the mulatto-man, — Lydia and Donald on one side, Lydia next on the right to our Dwarf host, and I on the opposite side of the table. Immediately at his master's left side, sat the great Cartouche, his head high above the table level. That dog's eyes expressed always, in the highest degree, unfaltering devotion, and counteracted, in their brave gentleness, the savage look of his mouth, where two tusks raised the lip, and showed their whiteness. The heavy hound-ears were fine and glossy, and his broad forehead looked as thoughtful as a man's. At the table-end, opposite the master's, was an unoccupied broad high chair, the seat only a few inches below the table level, wide enough for two persons, and the chair-back elaborately carved with rats and mice, hastily scampering over the top, and around the sides. The strange sights of that dining-room, its elegance, the Dwarf's unusual dress, the tropical parrot, the warden hound, and (perhaps as much as anything else) the odd, unoccupied chair, filled us children with the greatest wonder. I think we would have sat speechless, and without eating, through the soup course, had not the good breeding of home, and the funny sayings of the Dwarf, diverted our attention somewhat from the objects of our surprise and curiosity. When the soup was removed, and as the servant entered with fish, Cammano shrieked out, 'Come, Tabbies, come. Aha, aha!' and as the satirical laugh finished his call, a little swing-door in the wall, which we had not noticed before, was lifted by the back of a cat, and thus, in succession, *seven* cats jumped on to the floor, and made their soft, gentle way across to the big chair, on which they leaped, and seated themselves in a row. Such a sight was altogether too funny. Sister laughed out in the most uncontrolled delight, and Donald and I shouted, whilst Al Surrenne leaned back in his chair, laughing more heartily than any of us, at our amusement and surprise. But although the cats had never, probably, been laughed at before, they evinced no discomposure. Two yawned: the others looked straight at the fish, and licked their lips. The largest was all yellow, with only about an inch of tail; two were the curly, white, long-wooled cats of Japan; one was gaunt and jet-black, with bright green eyes; two were handsome Maltese; and one, a shy, frisky little gray and fawn fellow, was a kitten with cropped ears, but abundance of tail. They ate without greediness, of fish, from a long china dish which the servant placed before them. When we had finished, and they had neatly licked their dish, the waiter prepared to remove the course, at which point Cammanno slapped his wings with zest, and screeched in louder tone than ever, — 'T's'cat, t's'cat, t's'cat!' The cats, at the cry, made their exit with rapidity, going each through the spring-door, like the harlequin in a pantomime. The dinner was excellent, the dishes more varied and delicious than we had ever tasted before; the servant unofficiously attentive; Cartouche watching and listening sagely; the parrot expressing odd sentiments continually, whilst our host treated sister as if she was really a fairy queen, and conversed with us all as if he were a boy, though at times falling for a moment into an absorbed, gloomy manner, when he would speak to himself or Cartouche in a way we did not understand. At those few short intervals, Cartouche looked up at his master with an anxious expression, and Cammanno uttered hoarse, uneasy croaks.

"Our host gave us claret to drink, telling us that, next to milk, that was the best drink for young people; but we did not like it. The Dwarf himself emptied a bottle of champagne.

"When dinner was finished, the Dwarf took sister's hand, and led us into the hall and through it to a door we had not opened in our morning's explorations. It gave us admission to a long, uncarpeted, unfurnished room, that was simply arched overhead. Two long, narrow windows, on one side, admitted the light, and their embrasures supplied the only seats, but one, in the room. That one was a high, stiff chair, that stood before an immense organ, which entirely filled up one end of this music-hall. 'I'll play for you,' said the Dwarf, and, dropping sister's hand, he climbed up on the organ seat. All the musicians, whose playing I have heard described, run their fingers carelessly through their hair, and then make wonderful movements up and down the notes. The Dwarf did nothing of the kind, but struck immediately into the most brilliant Spanish dance, — a movement sometimes indolent, and sometimes fiery, and so full of invitation and delight, that it was impossible, whilst it sounded, to restrain either the muscles of the limbs or of the face. When the player turned his head and discovered our sympathy, he changed his music to a martial march, — zounds, how grand it was! Had we had but one band in Mexico to play like that, we would have walked right over the Mexican varlets in six weeks. As it ceased, like a grand halt of ten thousand soldiers, Donald and I shouted. 'Hurrah!' answered Al Surenne, tossing up his right hand, as if it held a drum-major's baton. A half-minute's silence, and then he played the air of a song we used to call 'Mother's Words,' — a tune so touching that I would rather not hear it now, — and as the Dwarf played it, we children were entirely overcome. Ha, ha! how sister sobbed. Hearing which, the musician stopped with a break, struck a few loud, bright notes, and jumped from his high chair, and Cartouche in the hall outside — you know, perhaps, how some dogs dread music — uttered a wail that made us shiver. 'How that hound fears this organ,' said the Dwarf, and there *is* more in the instrument than I ever mean to wake up. It seems as if I were torturing a life. If I kept at it long (do you know, children), I believe it would come out of the pipes and strangle me.'

"I'll tell you what I thought: it was, that he would go mad if he played much on that organ: why, then his face looked dark and wild as a maniac's. Strange, strange being! so gentle, so fierce: like a joyous child one moment, like a stern man the next: impressing one with a sense of power and mystery, though so small in body, and ludicrous in his vanity. Do you know I almost believe the Rich Dwarf was — an — elf. As I recall now his home, his modes of life, his humors, his *appearances* (not appearance, for his face and manner were constantly changing), his strange wanderings in speech, his prophecies, his intimacy with birds and beasts, and — his fate, — I am puzzled by its mystery. However, I did not mean to leave my story, if it is one; but something in the way that fire burns, — I can't explain it to you exactly, — that thin flame there creeping under the log, and leaving it to flash up the chimney-back in the soot, and then join itself again to what it left, and break into a blaze and crackling for a moment — sometimes with a hiss, sometimes with a roar — Why, I feel — zounds! I do — as if the Dwarf was in some way hearing me now; as if that same flame was a part of him, — a part of his *spirit!*"

As my Uncle Captain said that, I remember the blaze died out like the turning down of a lamp, and we sat for a second or two in a darkness complete, save for the ashes' glow; then — sph-i-i-i-ze — there escaped a gentle, long-drawn whistle from the hickory, a puff of smoke curled up the chimney, and the fire was warmly blazing again; so my Uncle Captain, laughing in a half-bewildered manner, knocked the empty pipe-bowl on the chair between his legs, and continued: —

"Well, when we went into the hall again, we saw the coach at the door. 'Yes,' said sister, 'we should have been at home an hour ago; we must hurry.' Our host spoke not a word, — did not seem to hear her, or see us. He looked like one in a dream. He stood rubbing one of Cartouche's ears, and whistling slowly to himself. We were soon ready, and went up to our host to say 'Good-by,' and thank him for our pleasant day. He took sister's hand, and eyed us inquiringly and sadly, but said nothing. When we made a motion to go, he attended us, still holding sister's hand. When he had helped sister in, and we boys had sprung after her, he turned, as if to leave us, but in a second turned again, climbed into the carriage, and asked, just as a child might, 'Will you kiss me, Fairy Lydia?' and, boys, your mother kissed him. He jumped out, smiling happily, wished us 'Good-by,' with a wave of his shako; and black Belzar, with the impish footman beside him, drove off with a dash.

"When we reached home, it was dark. Our father had arrived whilst we were away, — his first return to us, after a separation of seven months. We had the story of our wonderful visit to tell, which greatly interested father and mother; and their counsel, after all our reports were heard, was that we should not speak of the particulars of our adventure, outside of our family, or before the servants, as what we might tell would surely be exaggerated and misunderstood.

"Five months passed without our seeing the Rich Dwarf. In that time, he was only seen in Altonborough twice, as he drove through the village in his coach; but, almost every week, the monkey of a footman scampered up to our door, on horseback, to leave a beautiful bouquet for sister, from the Dwarf; or, as the card attached to it, read, 'For Fairy Lydia, from Al Surenne; M. Surenne d'Auvergne presents his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Mardroff.'

"About the middle of September of that year, the Dwarf's coach drew up again at our gate. This time the black page presented with the bouquet a letter addressed to our parents; and the bearer (who always treated our Peggy with comical respect, since the sudden lesson she had taught him at his first appearance) informed Peggy, with many enormous words, that he would 'dewait un arnsur,' which he did by performing a mitigated double-shuffle, with accompaniment of a subdued whistle, on the porch. That mild expression of exuberant spirits was checked, however, by the long lash of the grave coachman.

"The note from the Rich Dwarf was an earnest request that our parents would allow Donald and myself to make him a visit of several weeks. He expressed the pleasure he had enjoyed when we were with him before, adding, that notwithstanding the difference of age, he esteemed us as excellent companions. He also regretted that the absence of any lady in his household deprived him of the happiness of asking our sister to increase the favor he was requesting of our parents. And closed by promising to keep us constantly under his best care.

"He was to send for us the next day, if our parents' reply was an assent.

"We had no regular studies that autumn; and as the pleasure of the visit was so great to us, and our host evidently a gentleman, father and mother wrote a reply of acceptance, with expressions of their sense of the compliment. When the coach came the next day, the black boy brought an enormous basket of hot-house flowers for our mother, and a magnificent musical-box for *your* mother. That is it in the parlor now — is it not, Lydia?

"That night we slept in the Dwarf's castle, — Donald and I, — in a fine room near our host's, which he showed us on our way up to bed. It was not in the main house, nor was it really a room; but by a door that opened from the hall, next to our door, you went into a roof-covered apartment without walls, the roof extending, like that of a Swiss cottage, far beyond the lines of the room, and supported by columns and arches of stone, so that the Dwarf's bed-chamber was really an out-of-doors affair, only protected from rain. From the open spaces you looked down into a rocky chasm, on the bluff of which stood the side, or back, of the castle. Sturdy, twisted rock-cedars found crevices for their roots, here and there, on the side of the chasm, at the bottom of which there brawled a narrow, deep brook. The sun rose opposite the Dwarf's bed, and, looking east, one had (through one of the wall openings, as in a frame) a wild, picturesque landscape of forest and hills. A swinging lantern hung from a beam above, nearly to the iron bed-head; beside which, suspended by a hook in a column, was a fencing foil without a button, and sharpened to a needle point. A thick fur was laid at the bed-side, and another covered the narrow bed. Over the bed, on the unopen side of the room (that against the main house), was a lovely painting of the Dwarf's mother. In the middle of the chamber there was another fur, — Cartouche's bed. Of other furniture there were only two pieces, — an iron box, and an old-fashioned chair. Our host watched us with amusement, as we expressed in words (and by looks too, I suppose) our astonishment at such a sleeping-room.

" 'All my family sleep here, you see, boys; the birds come in to see us in the morning; so does the sun, so do pleasant breezes and perfumes. Sometimes furious storms, that make the pines sing gloriously, fly through my chamber. I like them to shout close to me, and to hear all the stories — some wild, some sad, some happy — that the rains tell on the roof. Owls hoot and laugh close by; one moonlight night, a great gray fellow raised an impudent t'whoot right on the foot of my bed, but Cartouche got some of his feathers. My mother watches over me here, as if I were in the nursery, and that brook below always puts me to sleep.'

" 'But what is that foil for?' I asked.

"'O, that is my night weapon, — the best instrument in the dark.'

"'And the lantern?' said Donald.

"'Sometimes I like to read during the night, and the wind can't blow out that.'

"He took his night-lamp to one of the archways, and bade us look down into the chasm. Cartouche laid his head on his master's shoulder, and looked too; but we could see only rents of blackness, and a shivering of the light's rays on clumps of foliage. There was a rustle of wings, — bats or owls, — a startled bird's cry, and the louder sound of the stony brook.

"And then the Dwarf told us to be off to bed, that it was nearly nine o'clock; we sat up much later than that at home, but never again as late, on our visit to the castle, where bed hour was generally soon after dark, and the breakfast-time when the sun was half an hour high.

"'Philip and Donald,' said Al Surenne, as he bade us good-night, 'you have forgotten, now that we are together again — it is too bad that the dear little Fairy Lydia can't be with us! — you have forgotten my request, when you were here before, to call me always "Al Surenne;" but be sure to remember it after to-night. Good-night! Mezzotinto' (that was the name of the impish black boy) 'is your page, servant, slave, follower, and sworn attendant whilst you are here; keep him busy, and be sharp with him. He shall sleep on a cot, just outside your door.

Let me know if he disobeys you, or sulks, and I'll have Cartouche shake him; but he is a good little crow, is Mezzo, with all his deviltry, and I know he will be true as steel to you, boys; so, good-night again, and no dreams. Cartouche, see the young gentlemen to their room, and look whether Mezzotinto is on hand.'

"And so Cartouche did, looking snuffingly at the black boy, who was rolled up on the cot, like a cub in a cave, and then trotting back to his master, who waited, with the hall-door open, for his sentinel's return.

"I cannot give you a journal of each day's occupation and happiness at Terre Sauvage. We walked, and played games with Al Surenne. He mounted us on splendid horses, and although we had been at home in a saddle from the time we were chicks, he taught us the perfections of horsemanship, until we could leap with safety anything our horses could clear, shoot from their backs, pick up objects from the ground with our animals at their speed, and use our horses in all their moods with the calmness and judgment which give a rider the mastery, and the ridden confidence and sympathy.

"When our host was away from us in his study or work-room, and his frequent solitary rambles, we used to go about with Mezzotinto, in search of adventure, or fishing, or setting snares in the woods. Sometimes we loafed about the stables, where were horses of many kinds,—for hunting, for racing, and for breeding. We asked Al Surenne one day what he did with all those, as he himself seldom went from his estate; and he answered, 'Well, in the first place, boys, I love horses more than men or women; and then Colonel Mace enters some of the runners for the courses, once in a while. That stallion the boy was exercising yesterday, is direct from Sir Tatton Sykes, and took the Kentucky plate last year. Sometimes Monsieur Lassalle comes here, and he and I ride and hunt every day.'

"Lassalle, Lassalle? I thought. O, that was the name I had heard of the Dwarf's second in the duel. People said he had never been seen since that event. Strange!

"Donald then asked Al Surenne whether he had many friends to visit him.

"'*Friends?* my dear boy, no; I have never possessed many of those: yours is the age to believe in friends. Birds, dogs, and horses are my friends, — true and tender. But there are three beings, now, whom I want to hold as friends, — you two boys, and your dear sister. Will *you* be my friends? The two gentlemen I have mentioned are the only persons, beside yourselves, who have ever slept under my roof. Those two are the only white men I know in the world. Now, boys, though you are boys, you are gentlemen. I have a wish and command to make to you: The questions you have just asked are natural and all right; but now and here let us agree, we three boys, that we will stifle all curiosity about each other; and that when we part, we will only tell of one another what we are sure we may tell. I think you will not find this hard to know. Do you understand me?'

"We answered that we did, and that we would try to do as he had said.

"One morning, when we had been at Terre Sauvage for a week or more, we went on a hunt, where I wounded my first deer, and Al Surenne ran him down on horseback, ahead of all the dogs but Cartouche. It was only in hunting that the Dwarf ever showed anything but love toward animals; and I used to wonder that the same man who could shoot a stag (a doe he never ran nor shot at), or run down a fox or boar, was as gentle with every other beast, and with all birds, as if they were children. I have seen many different kinds of birds — hawks, jays, pigeons, and even the wild grouse — come to him like tame sparrows: that was when we were not too near. And how he had gotten this power with wild birds, I cannot imagine. I have heard him imitate their cries, and draw the different birds from long distances to light near to his hand, or on his shoulders or head. To see a great hawk, soaring high above the forest, turn from its course at his call, and whirl down and about his head, answering him as one bird does another, was a wonderful sight.

"One day at dinner, when we had been at the castle eight days, our host eat nothing, but sat with his head on a hand, seemingly unconscious of any

"I have seen many different kinds of birds come to him like tame sparrows." Page 264.

presence but that of the anxious Cartouche, and that of the noisy Cammanno. When his eyes turned to us, they wore an expression of pain and bewilderment. As soon as the meal was finished, he left us, and we did not see him again, to speak with him, for more than two days. I awoke in the middle of the night, hearing the organ below played to the wildest strains, whilst poor Cartouche uttered smothered howls in the hall, like the wails of a suffering child. In the morning we sent Mezzotinto to ask if his master was well; but he came back without a reply, for Cartouche growled fiercely when he knocked at the Dwarf's door. All that day we did not see master or dog, but at midnight I was startled again, this time by Cartouche's barking outside the house. The moon was shining brightly. I went to the window, and saw opposite, on a lawn, bordered by cedars and hemlocks, the little figure of the Dwarf striding up and down, and wildly tossing his arms about; whilst Cartouche sat like a mourner beside his master's path, expressing as sympathizingly as a dumb animal could, his distress. Presently the dog trotted up to the Dwarf's side, and then together they paced up and down the melancholy walk. Donald and I did not understand it, — what it was that made our kind friend so strange, so miserable, — whether sickness, or bad news of some kind, had changed him so. We felt that it would be improper to interrupt even his misery; we could not question him, we could do nothing to help him. We returned to our beds, and the last thing I remembered that night was the sound of Cartouche's bark. But in the morning, when we went down-stairs, there in the hall were the Dwarf and Cartouche, as happy as children. The master would hold a stick for the dog to leap, and then give it to the dog to hold in his mouth, whilst he (the Dwarf) leaped it, — a standing leap, let me tell you, as high as his ears, — that is more than most men can do with a run. Al Surenne called for us to join in the sport; and so we did, having fine fun and exercise, until we were called to breakfast. Not a word nor a sign did the Dwarf give of his mysterious illness, and so peculiar were the circumstances, that we dared not speak of it to him.

For days after that, the Dwarf was as merry, and amusing, and companionable as any comrade I ever had: as affectionate as a sister, whilst he excited our admiration by continual exhibitions of agility and address, — climbing, leaping, riding, and shooting. He was another but a smarter boy, and sometimes we entirely forgot that our companion was a man. The house changed its character with the Dwarf's mood: Cammanno was full of fun; Mezzotinto's eyes twinkled like — no, not a bit like stars — does nothing else twinkle but stars? Well, anyhow they *twinkled*, and his limbs, and even wool, laughed with every motion. Cartouche was happy; even with all his savage dignity, he sometimes now *frisked;* but generally, extended on his outstretched legs, he lay, wagging his tail, and watching his master. We all had a fine time together, until, one afternoon, there came up a sudden thunder-storm. We were in the library with the Dwarf, Cartouche crouched by the window snapping at flies, and Mezzotinto stretched in a corner snoring. We were looking at some fine engravings of Napoleon's campaign in Russia. It was warm, and the Dwarf, losing more and more his interest in the explanations he was giving, kept exclaiming, 'What is the matter? what is coming?' As yet we had heard no thunder, and the landscape, seen from our window, was pleasant and sunny, with no shadows of the approaching storm. Soon the Dwarf left the engravings. He threw himself restlessly into a chair, where he remained not a moment, but sprang up again to walk the room. Boys,' he said, 'don't you feel something terrible near us? What is it? what is it?' evincing great distress as he spoke. Just then we heard a long rumble, like the roll of artillery wagons. 'Ah!' exclaimed the Dwarf, betraying in his voice and pallor excessive alarm, — 'ah! that's it; my death, my death, or its warning, — a thunder-storm!' Cartouche jumped through the window, and with most insane fury barked at the coming storm, as if he would frighten it away, whilst the Dwarf stood with his hands to his eyes, trembling. Another roll, — nearer. Soon came a startling flash, followed by such a tremendous volley of thunder, and sudden drift of blackness, that we too stood in fear, and so blinded both by the fork of lightning, and its succeeding gloom, that we could not see one another in the same room. When in a moment the darkness broke, the Dwarf had disappeared, and Cartouche sprang through the room to follow his master wherever he had gone.

"When the short, fierce storm had entirely passed over, our host came out to us as we came from the stables toward the house. 'You saw a coward that time. I'll confess it. I can't brave thunder and lightning. When a storm is hours away, strange fears and presentiments come upon me. The sound of thunder shakes me frightfully, and the flash of lightning — O! how it scorches me! All this is not so foolish as you think; for I feel, I *know* that by a stroke of lightning I shall die. Fancy seeing the known agents of your death appearing to you at times in such awful displays. How often I have known the horrors of death! It is not death I fear, but its black columns marching through the trees and over the mountains, hundreds of miles, to the dread band of thunder rolling, with muffled strokes, its dead march, — the winds fleeing before its course, the forests bending their heads in dread! A guard of twelve *men* only march forth to shoot the condemned soldier. An army *of God*, clothed in clouds, stepping to the awful strains of *thunder*, must come before my unbandaged eyes, to blast with a volley of lightning my little *dwarfed* life!'

"O, could you have heard the despairing tones of that speech,—the bitterness of those words, 'My little dwarfed life.' Could you have seen the protesting misery on the Dwarf's passionate face, the weird grace and vehemence of that little figure, gesturing as if it would paint again on the now blue sky the storm that had passed,—the picture of his doom. Could you have heard and seen the Dwarf then, you would have pitied and loved that strange being, of whom I cannot think now as merely an earthly creature, but as either possessed at times by mysterious influences, or as so delicately constituted that agencies in nature, unfelt by us, and not yet comprehended by the wisest philosophers, touched the finely strung chords of his organization, as the unseen winds strike sound from the Æolian harp. However, to speculate on this will only delay my story.

"The Dwarf had one great room on the second floor, which he called his 'work-room.' It was a studio, laboratory, armory, and carpenter shop. There were pictures finished and unfinished, crayoned scenes on the ceiling and walls, books tossed about on the benches and on the floor, stuffed birds and animals, pinned bugs, beetles, and flies, jars with preserved reptiles, bottles and boxes, live snakes (the Dwarf's peculiar aversion) in glass cases,—rattlesnakes, adders, and copperheads,—a chemical stove, old-fashioned arms of Chinese, Aztec, Crusader, and Revolutionary times, and a carpenter's bench, with tools and lathe. We liked very much, on rainy days, to go there with Al Surenne, costumed like a diminutive magician, his sack-cut dressing-gown being of silk, figured as if with hieroglyphics; wearing, too, pointed red morocco slippers, and a smoking-cap, which looked like that of Mephistopheles. The snakes he kept to experiment on with poisons and other agents. He always smoked in the work-room, — smoked a pipe whilst painting, or at the carpenter's bench, and we and Cartouche sat and watched him, or I teased the devilish snakes. At times the Dwarf amused us with chemical exhibitions. Once, too, he showed us a machine with which, and the aid of a long wire, he said he could send messages to us in Altonborough, — messages that would be received by us in the same moment he sent them, and connecting a wire from the machine to a stroke-bell at the opposite end of the room, he turned the handle of the machine with his left hand, whilst with the right he pressed on a key, or stop; thus he made the bell strike as he wished. He promised to connect a wire with a bell in our house, and then by having different numbers of bell-strokes signify different letters or words, he could send us any message he wished."

Remember that Uncle Captain told this before Morse had developed his invention of the telegraph, and that the Dwarf had used the same idea in experiments and amusement, years before that.

"But the most wonderful instrument that the

Dwarf amazed us with, was one for the gathering of electricity, and *controlling* it as powder and shot in a gun, — that is, using it to throw artificial lightning with precision and deadly effect. In fact, he had constructed a *lightning gun!*

"The only explanation I can give of it is, that the principal part of the apparatus was a mass of platinum (I think) jars, silver-plate revolving rollers, wires, and cylinders. I suppose that this part of the machine was an enormous voltaic battery, carried and perfected so far beyond what is even now known, that the Dwarf was able, not merely to produce sparks of electricity, such as we have seen to pass off from the common electrical machine, but flashes of fire, resembling in miniature the lightning flash from the charged storm. Indeed, as I believe, he made that of which his life stood in dread, *lightning*. And now, what rendered this the more wonderful, was that this lightning was thrown from the generator into and through a barrel of some kind, — whether that was of metal, or what else, I know not, — like a rifle barrel, and sighted as such, by which means he could direct the barrel to bear exactly on any point; and then starting the machine, could throw a deadly missive, like a thin arrow flame, on that point. The first proof he gave us of its power, was by taking one of the snakes, having first rendered it stupid by administering a narcotic, and placing it on a stone stand in the window-place, so that if the deadly stroke passed the object, it would strike against the side of a large mass of rock, some sixty yards off in the wood. Then he sighted along the barrel, until it bore exactly on the snake's head. Having arranged that, he turned the crank of the machine for a few seconds; and then, calling us to watch, he touched or turned something in the machine, when instantaneously a delicate blade of fire gleamed like the flashing of a ray from the barrel to the object. We went to the snake, and found a hole like that which might be made by a darning-needle, searing through and through the head. Another time he shot through the window, by the same means, a hedgehog, which was sleeping at the base of the rock I mentioned just now.

"We had been at Terre Sauvage nearly four weeks, — it was the twelfth of October — our visit was to end on the fifteenth, — when we had a fox-hunt, that brought for us a black fox, a trophy for any hunter, and for me it won (by an accident) my legacy. It was in this way. On a damp, cold morning, the Dwarf started us out of out beds at six o'clock. Before seven we had eaten breakfast, and mounted the horses. The six hounds, Cartouche at their head, were eager for the sport; but their master kept them in, back of the horses, until we had gone two miles, and reached the foot of one of the hill gullies, where it spread into a piece of swamp land. Here were several acres, cleared of timber, but rough with boulders, and waist deep in grasses and briers.

"'Now, boys,' said the Dwarf, 'place yourselves at intervals of about one hundred yards apart, right around this gully foot, so as to mark what comes out; and I'll go in with the dogs where the east timber stands, and work up your way. I have seen a panther-cat make up that gully, from the same patch. If a deer gets up, let him go, for I want to run his foxship this morning.' With that, he turned his horse from us, and the dogs, knowing that their fun was near, gave a yelp at his horse's heels, following close.

"Hardly had we taken our places, than the hot, delighted *find* of one of the hounds reached us; and then, as one and another, Cartouche second, opened on the fresh scent with a yelp, clear as a cornet, we knew it was time to keep our eyes open. The dogs we could hear sweetly enough, but could not see them; though there was Al Surenne sitting quietly on his horse, just in the edge of the timber, and waving his hat for us to know his pleasure at such a quick find. The dogs came nearer and nearer to us, all on the bay. There was close to me a long slip of ground, covered with bushes and vines. This piece ran, like a wedge, for half a mile up the gully. Suddenly the dogs were fifty yards from me, and at work in this piece, a complete covert for an animal against our shots; for so thick was it, that we could not see one of the dogs.

"We waited for the Dwarf, and then pushed up the gully after the dogs. The fox — for such it was — had given us the slip, so far. And then began a ride that lasted until two in the afternoon, hardly ever up to the hounds, so bad was that rocky, uneven country for horses. By a proper place we knew, we left Terre Sauvage, and made west for thirteen or fifteen miles. Then the fox turned, and with a great circuit to the north, that happened to bring him under Donald's eyes and shot, — but he missed him, — he struck for a back track the same path he had run out on. Up now came Donald in a gale of excitement, crying, 'O thunder! it is a black fox, — black as jet, — and I missed him!' — 'Ride on,' said the Dwarf, 'and try him again.' So we did, all; but our gait was not a gallop, and the dogs were sometimes a mile away. We hunters, too, were separated, and I was ahead, when the chase brought our return to the west border of the Dwarf's estate. By the one way of entrance and exit, known only to those living in the estate, I rode through, glad enough to get again to where my horse could quicken his pace. I saw too, now, how I could make a short cut across to the track, whereby the fox must surely return to his burrow, — his path would be through the descending gully. Hotly I pressed my noble horse, and bravely he responded to my urging rein. I had nearly reached the point where I desired to take a stand, when we came to a spread of rock, that lay in well marked strata, and covered half an acre, perhaps, of the slope. I would not take the time to ride about it, but pushed straight over its insecure surface. My gun hung ready in my right hand, whilst the left guided the horse wherever I could pick a better course; but my attention was directed up the gully, down which came the hot music of the hounds, and of a sudden I felt my horse slipping from under me, and I was thrown hard on the rocks. With the instinct of a sportsman, I had kept hold of my gun, and held it high, so that it did not explode when I fell. I had struck on my right side, and my whole frame twitched with the bang and bruise. Within a few seconds I made out to rise; though I felt roughly treated, there were no bones broken; but my horse remained where it had fallen, certainly injured, or that gallant fellow would never lie so. Then — O! how the chorus of the approaching dogs drove every thought but Fox from my mind. I would remain where I was. He must pass near. And hark! I heard, away up behind me, a call, and the crashing of a rider; but I turned not my head, for — sight to fix my eyes, and nerve my hands — there, not eighty yards west, trotting quickly, now to stand for a flash of hearing, then to dash into a frightened gallop, a fox — *the black fox* — darted into and across a short piece of open ground, like a shadow of guile. Flint and tinder, what a blazing chase! Hardly had he passed from my sight, than Cartouche darted like an arrow into the same open, nostrils to the ground, then his trumpeting nose swung toward the skies, with a peal of loud victory. O, how my heart beat! louder than the hound's voice to me; but my muscles seemed to harden into iron. There, there! in his last desperate effort, the fox again! quick! in a second he will be hidden! Bang! Stopped in the flash, nose and tail stretched out, with the last long leap. I jumped toward him, and had barely time to swing him aloft, and shout a cheer with what breath remained in me, when Cartouche was upon me. Not a hundred yards off, the Dwarf restrained his own fierce, sweat-flecked horse by the side of my fallen steed.

"Well, the dogs came up all, and as I was about to sever the brush, intending to throw the carcass to the dogs, as was usual, Donald, hurrying near, shouted, 'O, save that splendid skin!' Sure enough, — the rarity of a black fox-skin. When I had hastened to where the Dwarf had dismounted, and was gently handling my injured animal, he did not speak of my glory, but said, as if he were ready to sob, 'Good heavens! Philip, I believe Gaspar is ruined.' Then I told him how it happened as we both rubbed poor Gaspar, and Al Surenne turned to me, 'Why, Philip, my dear boy, are you not hurt? Off with your coat, quickly.' I did so, but not very quickly; for I was getting stiff. The whole length of my arm and side was a beautiful bruise.

"'Come, up in my saddle, Philip. No; Donald into that, and you into his; you are too much hurt to ride Vandal; but, perhaps now, after his chase, he will carry Donald. At any rate, try; you must get home, and send Eric'—he was the head stable-man—'for both Compondu and Tournier,'—two of the forest guards,—'all of them to hurry to me faster than they ever moved in their lives. Tell them to bring the tan cart. Tell Eric what is the matter, too, and he'll know what else to bring.'

"Al Surenne held his own horse, and soothed him whilst he gave us the orders, and Donald helped me into his saddle. As Donald mounted Vandal, the Dwarf, who was turning again to the prostrate Gaspar, said, suddenly, 'Philip, this great piece of rock shall be your *fortune*. I'll leave it to you in my will. Go now! *Stop!'* All ready to start, we looked to him in amazement, as he uttered this last order, and then exclaimed,—his manner and voice showing, as he threw a hand to his head, that something awful had occurred to him,—'Great heavens! I remember. "Sur terre d'Auvergne le *renard noir meurt quand les jours de son nain sont comptés et courts*."'[1]

"A half minute he stood in his paralyzed attitude, and then exclaimed fiercely, and as if awakening from a swoon, 'Why do you stand there? Go! I told you.' We obeyed instantly, but were greatly perplexed at the sudden great change in the Dwarf. The French he spoke we did not understand, until, as you will see, he afterward explained it.

---

[1] On the estate of Auvergne the black fox dies when the days of its dwarf are numbered and short.

"Within an hour the men had gone to their master, and together they brought poor Gaspar in. His fall had strained him across the loins; but, through the Dwarf's immediate care and skill, he was cured, unusual as is such recovery; and I rode the same splendid animal for many years after that. He carried me in Mexico.

"The next morning the Dwarf came to breakfast in a simple suit of black, without color, lace, or ornament of any kind whatever, and that was the first time I had ever seen him otherwise than picturesquely dressed. He no longer looked like a boy. The restless fire had gone from his eyes. His countenance was pale, quiet, and determined. It was as if the sun was taken from a landscape. His voice was steady, sluggish, and low, like the sound of a dull bell, without silver to enliven it.

"He said nothing when we met, and did not seem to hear our 'good morning.' He eat nothing, but drank his coffee slowly, and sat with a hand on Cartouche's head. We were at the table half an hour before he said a word, or looked at us. Then he spoke, with the tone of one reading something by rote: 'Boys, my old quadroon nurse used to say, that when a black fox should be killed on the lands of the Auvergnes, then a dwarf of the family must die. Neither she nor any one knew then that I was a dwarf. We have killed the black fox — now Death is ready for me.'

At these words, that only moved Al Surenne's mouth, but stirred us with horror, Cartouche threw back his head, and let out a howl into the very face of his master; and Cammanno, perhaps at hearing the hound's awful cry, shrieked, 'Make your will: make your will.'

"'Yes I shall,' answered the master, unmoved.

"'But, Al Surenne, why?' exclaimed Donald, who was about to put in a demurrer to this general acceptance of such a horrible judgment. However, Al Surenne did not leave him to finish his interruption.

"'No matter, Donald; you listen to me: you can't prevent my death, because you do not believe it is so near. Cartouche, Cammanno, and I, are wiser than you: and perhaps Philip is'—

"'No, no!' I cried.

"'Well your face belies you. Philip, you stay with me a day or two longer, will you? but Donald, you go home to-day. Say nothing about this, —mind, Donald! Only, you can tell how Philip got a fall yesterday, and must keep quiet for a time, to get well over it. *But* go first to—to—Who is your father's lawyer in Altonborough?'

"Donald did not know. I answered, 'Roger Rantoul.'

"'Go to Mr. Rantoul,' the Dwarf continued, 'and tell him he must come here this morning,—*immediately*,—that my carriage will bring him. Mezzotinto,—he was standing behind my chair, —'go, order the carriage. Philip, you won't mind staying with me a little longer, will you?'

"I was so much affected by the prophecy, and the Dwarf's hopeless manner, that it was as if I had heard him really condemned to die, — and I only answered his appeal with tearful eyes. When the carriage was at the door, — Al Surenne was smoking, and walking the hall with Cartouche, — Mezzotinto announced it whisperingly to Donald. Donald hurried up to his generous host to say 'Good-by.' 'O, you are off now,' said the Dwarf, awakening from his thoughts. 'Good-by, eh? well, *good-by*, Donald, my dear boy. You are not too old, are you, to kiss a friend who loves you? and I am young enough to kiss a real boy.' And he kissed my brother, and walked with him, hand in hand, to the door. 'Donald, after you and Philip part from me here, I shall meet you before Philip, unless — unless — O, no matter! One of these days, Don, you know, many, many, many years from now, when I die, — if I ever die, — you and Lydia are to have Mezzotinto, and all the other blackies, and every one of the horses in my stable. Don't forget that.' Al Surenne was smiling oddly as he said those last words to my brother, but Don looked only puzzled. Well, the Dwarf kissed him again, and, as the carriage drove off, he turned, and took Cartouche's head in his hands, saying to the dog, 'Why is it that that dear young fellow will not live to be a man?' He seemed to look into the hound's big eyes for an answer; and he said, after a few minutes, to me, 'Philip, suppose you take the black fox to

Compondu. He will skin it in fine style, and cure the skin in the best way. Go, whilst I attend to this business with Mr. Rantoul. He will be here in half an hour. I'll see you at dinner.'

"We met again at dinner, when Al Surenne told me that Mr. Rantoul had been with him for an hour; and now that the making of his will was properly concluded, he would think no more of prophecies and black foxes, but he had not changed his suit of black, nor his absent, hopeless manner. His superstition might seem foolish: it did seem so to me. I did not really believe that his death was near, or foretold by the black fox's death; and yet the feeling, as if I were with a dying man, or prisoner condemned to die, was so overpowering, that, whilst I remained with the Dwarf, my stay was miserable and gloomy, and I looked upon my strange host with eyes of sad curiosity and compassion. In the month's time I had been his guest and friend, I had learned to love that wonderful dwarf-man, whose character and life were so eerie and lonesome, so full of strong powers and passions, yet with weird tints of grotesqueness and even weakness. His strangely fascinating manner with those he confided in, and the tenderness of his heart, won one to love him, who was both a gallant man and a sensitive child, in whose nature the sensible world and the invisible world seemed to unite.

"After dinner he asked me to ride with him. Of course I assented, and we rode from four to seven: not so fast as our horses could go, but at a high speed, twice swimming the Black River, and the Dwarf leaping everything he could find to leap. We did not converse. To the questions I put when we commenced the ride, he answered so uncertainly and abstractedly, that I soon discontinued them. Once, in the wild ride, he drew close beside me, and seized my hand, and so we rode for miles. As we galloped up the shaded avenue on our return, just as the night had got from duskiness to blackness, Al Surenne said,— 'Philip, would you think it dreadful to die at thirty-four?'

"Dreadful? No! but I would hate to *know* now that I could not live beyond that age.'

"'And yet,' he answered, 'I am thirty-four, and shall never be thirty-five. This knowledge does not affright me,—it only takes all project and zest out of what few days may remain. It robs me of life before death comes.'

"'O, Al Surenne,' I said, 'why do you feel so? How can you believe in the foolish song of an old nurse?'

"He laughed, and only made for a reply,— 'Philip, boy, you'll see!' All through that night the Dwarf played on the great organ. Where poor Cartouche hid himself, I know not. I did not shut my eyes until daybreak came, and the music ceased. The events and feelings which Al Surenne expressed in those magical harmonies, kept me in wakeful wonder and delight. Talk of operas: that was the opera of my life. Nothing since in music has ever inthralled me as did the Dwarf's playing that night. Though I was in my bedroom and bed, and was conscious that the Dwarf was playing on the organ in the music-room below; though I knew that such was the position, and that I was awake, — not sleeping and dreaming, but broad awake, — yet my senses, or my spirit, or something not my body, went to places I had never seen, nor heard described; and I saw them, and knew them (as I have since found them to be *exactly*). I met people with Al Surenne whom I only knew as names, up to that time; but I then *knew* them, and heard them as I have since come to know them, — those persons were Colonel Mace and Monsieur Lassalle. I saw and lived in such scenes of the Dwarf's life (I am sure) as were the deepest impressed on his heart and mind. Just as I might see the stage of an opera as the music expresses its action and sentiment; so, as the Dwarf vividly recalled the memories of his life in an ecstasy of music, his passion gave them essence, which clung to the notes like perfume to the place in which it has lain. So it must have been; for, certainly, whilst he played, I knew in the darkness scenes and events true in the Dwarf's past life, and yet I had never in any way known of them before. Now, you all know, — certainly you do, Sister Lydia, — that I am a pretty practical, unromantic old soldier; and when I tell you such a strange thing as I have just done, I am only telling you a fact as I know it, without any conjecture or fancy. Certainly the music brought appearances and occurrences through time and distance. That is a fact — and that is the whole of it. Now I will go on with the story.

"Because of loss of sleep during the night, I made it up in the morning, and did not wake for breakfast until near ten o'clock. The Dwarf and Cartouche were absent. After my meal, I searched for them in every place where I might expect to find them, — but in vain. Dinner-time came. I had to eat it alone. After dinner I went into the Dwarf's library, and there fell asleep over a book. When I awoke, which was with a sudden start, dragged up instantaneously, apparently, from a very deep slumber, the Dwarf, with Cartouche, sat opposite me, with their eyes on mine. The Dwarf looked haggard and pale. Cartouche looked as if he would wish both to do and feel like his master. The Dwarf spoke immediately, hurriedly, wildly, and huskily: 'Philip, you must go home — now — right off — before night; and I can't send you in the carriage: you must walk.'

"I felt angry and hurt at such a speech from my host.

"'Very well, sir,' I said, 'though it will be night before I can make half the distance, yet I will start immediately at your order:' and I rose from my seat; but the Dwarf's hand pulled me back, and his eyes put on such a tender, beseeching, and beset look, as if he were driven to do the thing which it hurt him more to do, than it could hurt me to receive. 'O Philip, boy, pity your friend this time; do what I tell you, and wait longer to understand it. No, you can't and must not go home alone, though Belzar can't drive you to-night. Cartouche shall go with you.' Then you should have seen the misery expressed by that dog. His head turned from his master, whilst his eyes glared angrily at me, and his tail fell. His entire attitude changed at his master's words. 'I give Cartouche to you: he is yours while you live. Do you mind, Cartouche?' The dog for answer uttered a frightful howl, and then turned from us, as if to hide his disgrace and sorrow. 'Well, it must be so. Another thing I give you, as you'll find by my will, — the field of rock, where you killed the fox, — it will make you rich. My executors will be your father and Monsieur Lassalle. See you, Philip, with all your earnestness, that my wishes are followed to the letter. When I am dead, I want this house burned just as it now stands, with everything in it; and I wish my body to be burned, and the ashes sprinkled on the ruins of the house. Your influence with your father must secure the exact fulfillment of these wishes of mine. Take this, my will, with you. Now, go, Philip, quickly. Don't say "Good-by!" Don't say anything: I know all you would say. Just shake hands with me, and *go*.'

"Overcome with grief and dismay, I rose and shook hands with him, and went to the door. Cartouche moved not. Al Surenne's head had fallen on the table, — 'Cartouche, *go!*'

"The dog followed me to the door, and then ran back with a determined growl. No, he could not leave his master. Then the Dwarf sprang up and seized a riding-whip. For the first time, to my knowledge, he struck Cartouche; and the poor, brave hound, as if broken-spirited and broken-hearted, ran through the door I held open. I cast one glance back. There were tears in the Dwarf's eyes, and his farewell gaze was one of despair; yet it said imploringly, 'Go!'

"When I got out of doors, I found the afternoon unusually warm and sluggish for October. It was then nearly six o'clock. Pondering in pain and wonderment over these last-told events, still feeling somewhat hurt at my hasty, unexplained dismissal, and considering with surprise the least part of the matter, — that I had to walk home, bag on arm, just like a boy, — I walked on with my thoughts, unconscious of the way, until the drop-bridge was reached. That was swung down, without a word from Compondu, but only a salute. I looked for Cartouche: he was following me, as a mourner to a funeral. It was growing dark. There were three or four miles before me yet. The sky was darkened with heavy clouds, and I heard just then the first far-distant peal of thunder.

Before I reached home, the night was black as pitch, a fitful wind brought gusts of big rain-drops, the heavens rolled with peal and peal of thunder, — to every report of which, Cartouche, now nearer me, howled in defiant rage, — and at intervals the whole country was lighted for a second by piercing forks of lightning.

"I arrived at home: no one was there but Maum Peggy. The family had gone, she said, — mother, father, Lydia, and Donald, — to take dinner with Mr. Blare, a planter ten miles off, and that they would never try to drive home in such a storm. So, calling Cartouche, I went immediately to my room, pulled off my wet clothes, and jumped into bed. Cartouche stretched himself on the floor. My window looked right up to the castle, five miles off. The bed was opposite the window; and, until I fell asleep, I watched the frequent, blinding flashes of lightning. I thought with pity of Al Surenne: how he must be suffering from the storm, and how he might escape its horrors.

"I had slept, whether ten minutes or two hours, I know not, when I was awakened, as if pierced, by a great blaze of lightning, so hot, brilliant, and withering, that it seemed to fuse and consume in one molten flash the spacious scene its awfulness had fired and annihilated. Then my scorched eyes were filled with blackness, whilst a roll of sharp, terrible explosions, made the house and my bed to tremble. My instant thought was, 'This is the end of the world.' I am not ashamed to confess how greatly I was terrified; and to increase the fearfulness of that night, Cartouche, when the thunder ceased, set up a howl that was enough to make the dead to shiver. To these sights and sounds there succeeded many minutes of deep silence. With the first glare of the lightning I had sprung upright in my bed, and so I continued. Suddenly, in the thick darkness I saw a little gleam of flame away in the west, like a star. A low, mournful sound at that moment came from the hound: the flame grew quickly larger and brighter, and Cartouche's distress increased to a loud, alarmed wail of anguish. A moment more, and I saw the Dwarf's hound standing erect by the window; and, O frightful sight! in the same fast-growing light I saw that the flames causing it were issuing from the castle. With a fierce, piercing cry, and the crashing of glass, Cartouche sprang through the window. In five minutes I was running on the road to the castle. The fire-engine company of Altonborough overtook me about a mile from Black River. We reached the river at the bridge, but the drop was raised,—Tournier was probably at the castle, trying to save it and his master,—there was no boat to cross in; and when some of our men had swum over, they could not lower the drop until they, after a fearful delay, cut or broke the chains by which it was suspended. But then the height of the fire was passed. I was an indifferent swimmer, but I could not stand on that east bank waiting; so I had swum across, barely succeeding in the effort, and scrambled on again toward my poor friend's home. Again the firemen overtook me. At length we reached — the ruin! The stone walls stood red with heat, and the reflection of the gulf of fire they encompassed. The great trees about the castle, crisped and bare, with curls of flames winding around them and licking up to the sky, stood hideous sentinels of the devastation. One of the forest guards — not Tournier nor Compondu — had been lost, in his efforts to stop the fire. I asked Compondu, 'Where is your master?' and he answered, 'Il — est — *mort!*' As he said it, I saw something coming from behind one of the walls. It was Cartouche: his hair burned off, except where, in pieces, little tufts here and there were yet ignited. I ran to him; and when he saw me, he jumped at me with a furious growl, and then rushed off to the woods.

"It was all finished. Not a vestige of our friend, the Rich Dwarf, — poor, wonderful Al Surenne, nor a recognizable piece of anything that had been his in the castle, bird or animal, was ever found in the ruins. Cartouche never returned to me, nor did he again recognize as friend or master any man; but, like a spectre, he haunted Terre Sauvage for years after the conflagration, sitting at night on the ashes of his old home, and howling out his misery to the winds and the solitude. When he disappeared, or the manner of his death, no one knew.

"By the will, the slaves and the horses went equally to Lydia and Donald, and — for Lydia from childhood was an Abolitionist, were you not, sister? — the negroes were all manumitted. Some remained with us, and (as you know, children) your cook, Maum Cephie, was once your mother's slave; and I believe she is the last living being in this country, of Surenne d'Avergne's household. To each of the game-keepers the Dwarf left a house (that which each had always occupied on the estate) and fifty acres of land; but in a few years they were all gone, I know not where, and their properties sold. The estate, what remained of it, except the acre of rock bequeathed to me, the Dwarf had given to the State; with the proviso that it should always be preserved in its forest state, what was on it, of tree, or of whatever else, left undisturbed, a retreat for bird and beast. My inheritance seemed barren enough, which troubled me little. I would have given it any day to have had Cartouche back again. But, nine years after Al Surenne's death, an honest man discovered gold in that mass of rock, and he came to me to purchase the acre, saying, 'Sir, I must tell you first that there is gold in that rock: for what will you sell it?' 'To you,' I answered, filled with astonishment at such honor, — 'to you, sir, I will sell it for five dollars, with the agreement that you will hereafter pay to me one quarter of whatever you sell it for, or get from it by working it;' and up to this day, I have received seventy-seven thousand four hundred dollars. Did I not come strangely by my legacy? There," — and he got from his straddle of the chair, to break up the smouldering logs into a flurry of sparks, and, finally, a broad flame, — "there: and now it is time either for lamps and tea, or for me to load my pipe."

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09874 607 4